



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

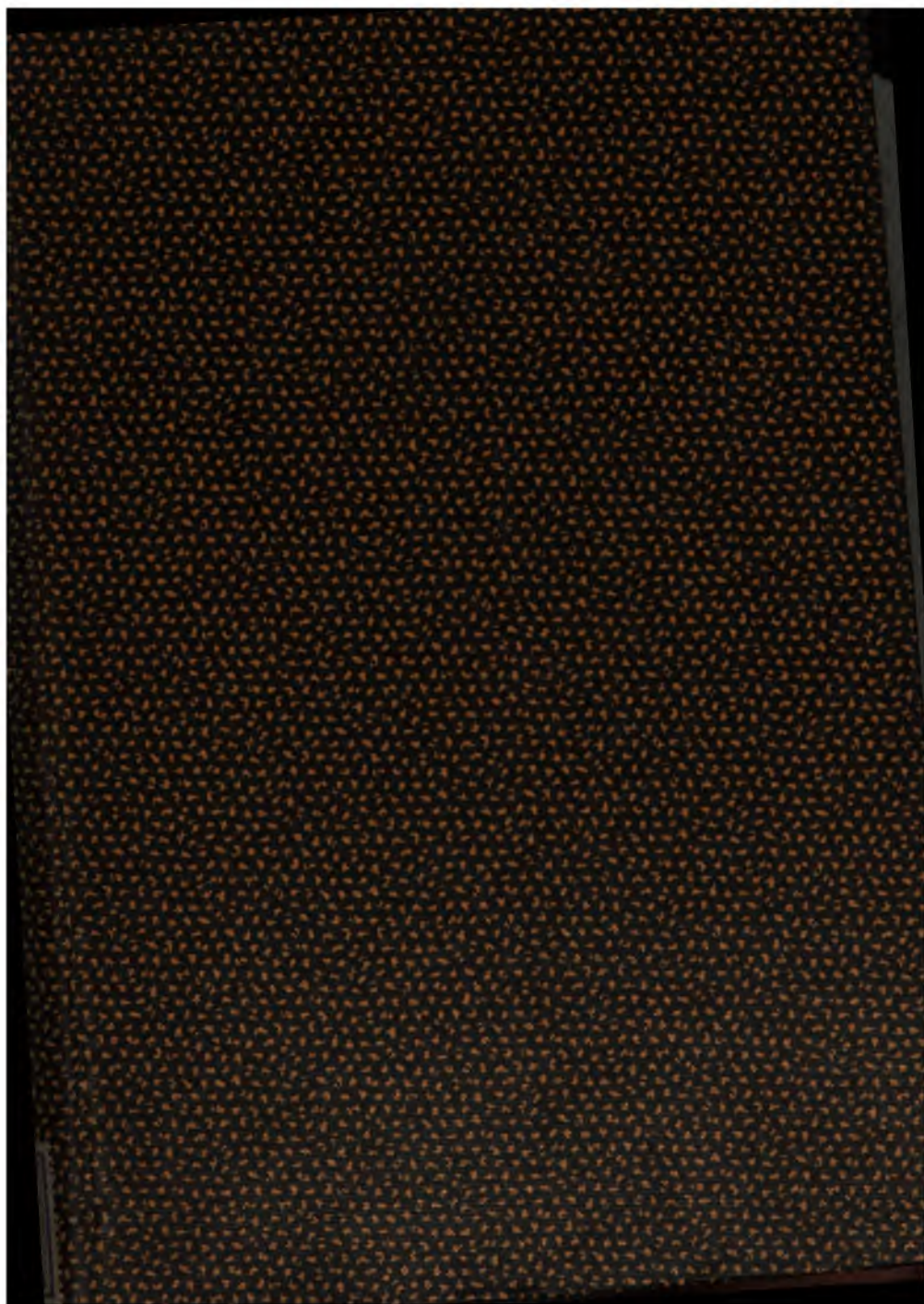
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600067096Y







A

# FAIR COUNTRY MAID.

BY

E. FAIRFAX BYRRNE,  
AUTHOR OF 'MILICENT.'

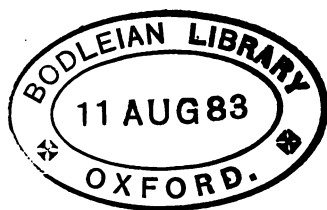
IN THREE VOLUMES.  
VOL. II.



LONDON:  
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,  
*Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen.*  
1883.

*[All Rights Reserved.]*

*Ed. R. 500*





## CONTENTS OF VOL. II.



### BOOK I.—*Continued.*

CHAPTER	PAGE
XVIII. 'GOOD-BYE, MARJORIE!' . . .	1
XIX. A READING LESSON . . .	29
XX. IN THE DESERTED QUARRY . . .	51
XXI. THE SHADOW OF OLD SCRAG . . .	84
XXII. IN THE PRISON . . .	113
XXIII. HOW ABEL WON HIS VICTORY . . .	131

### BOOK II.

I. THREE YEARS LATER . . .	153
II. HOW DERRICK WENT TO MILLTOWN . . .	174
III. A VISITOR AT OUZEL HOLE . . .	203
IV. THE TABLEAUX AT THE HALL . . .	227
V. MISUNDERSTANDING . . .	252







# A FAIR COUNTRY MAID.

—o—o—o—  
BOOK I.—*Continued.*  
—o—o—o—

## CHAPTER XVIII.

‘GOOD-BYE, MARJORIE.’

‘Jars,  
Jealousies, strifes, and heart-burning disagreements,  
Like a thick scurf o’er life.’

MIDDLETON.

**W**HEN Marjorie told Zachary Pearse that if anything could have made her love him it was his lameness, she spoke from the fulness of her heart. And yet she was mistaken. While his deficiency had given a peculiar tenderness to her friendship, it had, by making compas-

sion the prominent idea, prevented the growth of any other sentiment. Yet her affection for him was very deep, and she felt his loss keenly; she had leaned upon his superior intellect more than she knew, and now began to think that if Zachary were again at hand, she would make more of a friend of him, and would venture to confide to him some of her troubles.

For indeed these were troublous days to Marjorie, and she had need of a friend. Her heart failed as soon as Derrick left her at the gate on her return home from the Hall; she stood in the starlight outside the farm for a few distracted moments, trying to persuade herself that the news could only produce a favourable impression at home. Yet her mind misgave her sorely, and she had just enough of hesitation in her manner when she entered the kitchen to induce immediate question from the suspicious John.

Seating herself on a stool by Farmer Morrison, leaning her arms over his knees, and looking into his face, Marjorie began

the recital, and carried it to the end. She was aware that their relationship to the Squire was considered a matter of importance, and that John, for some reason, attached peculiar weight to it. It had never been an easy subject to deal with; disputes and trouble were associated with any reference to it amongst them in her earliest memory; especially of late years had it been the occasion of discord. Why this should be she could not understand, and had in vain turned over in her mind the probable causes. Surely now that the Squire had sent them a message of peace and goodwill, the turbulent passions which the subject excited would for ever be stilled. All these things were in her heart as she sat looking into her father's face, and telling him what had taken place. But his countenance was hard to read; her best hopes were uncertain; and towards John she dared not glance at all.

'Well, mother? Well, dad?' she said when she had finished, and found that no one immediately spoke.

Her father removed his pipe from his mouth, and stroked her hair.


‘Th’ Squire’s behaved well, my lass ; and it warms my heart t’ think as kin can recognise kin through the differences o’ station. But thou must na have thy head turned wi’ this, Marjorie ; it’s kind o’ th’ Squire, but things are as they were, and thou’ll go no more to the Hall.’

‘Ay, father !’ said Mrs. Morrison, letting her knitting fall upon her knee and looking up regretfully, ‘and he so cousinlike and kind.’

‘Aye, mother,’ returned the farmer ; ‘but I see my road clear. Th’ Squire may come here and welcome ; but my lass goes no more to the Hall.’

‘Oh—h !’ said Mrs. Morrison, with a little comprehending light in her eye.

Marjorie listened to this conversation with some sense of disappointment ; but her father, she had no doubt, was right, and on the whole she was relieved and satisfied at the way in which her story had been received. Only she



wished that John had spoken ; she had such fear that discontent would be lurking in his heart. He always saw things differently from the rest.

'Now, lass,' said her father, stroking her hair again, 'it's time for wenches to be i' bed. Kiss me, and off with thee.'

Marjorie rose obediently—she kept the childlike habit of obedience to her parents willingly in the midst of her stately womanhood—and bade them good-night. She said good-night also to John, and saw at once that his face was sulky, and even fancied that she detected a glance of peculiar malignity directed towards herself.

On the stairs she lingered for a moment ; she heard already the sounds of animated conversation in the kitchen, and dreaded a heated argument. But there was nothing specially to alarm her in the voices, and she went on to her room, and presently to bed, where almost instantly she fell asleep. The noise of the talk, however, came through the rafters, and in about a quarter of an hour waked

her again. The tones had risen; this time they were loud and angry: it was not talking that she heard, but hubbub. Starting up in her bed, she sat listening eagerly; then came the sound of the violent overthrow of a chair; this was followed by a stifled shriek from her mother, a scuffle, and a crash.

Marjorie sprang up, threw a shawl over her shoulders, and ran with bare feet to the door. Scarcely, however, had she opened it, than she heard John come staggering out of the kitchen and then go to the back, while her mother ran sobbing up the stairs. Marjorie met her at the top.

‘Oh, mother!’ she cried, taking the poor woman in her arms.

‘Thy feyther’s felled John to th’ yerth,’ whispered Mrs. Morrison; ‘oh, lass! my heart’s nigh broke i’ two.’

‘What has happened? *Why* is John angry?’ whispered Marjorie back. ‘Oh, mother, tell me how t’ help thee!’

‘It’s not for thee t’ hear, my lass. Come, get back to thy bed. I’m only fetching a bit

o' lint out o' thy drawer. Father's got an ugly bruise or two.'

'Oh, mother!' cried Marjorie, following her to the bedroom.

'It's nought, child,' said Mrs. Morrison, suddenly recovering herself and searching violently in a drawer. 'Come, come; don't set off a-crying. Men's fists are that hard; they canna help it. Get t' bed, lass; if it were aught t' mind, I'd call thee.'

'I'm sure it's bad, mother, or thou'd *niver* say it was nought!' said Marjorie anxiously, and tearing the lint into an available shape.

'Give me the lint and get t' bed, child. Wilt keep me talking for iver?'

Marjorie put it into her hand, and her mother hastened from the chamber; then the girl got shivering into bed, where, however, she sat listening to the painful silence in the room below.

Mrs. Morrison, returning to the kitchen, applied the lint bandage to her husband's wrist, which had received a slight strain. The only signs of the struggle were in the



pale exhausted look of the old man, and in the broken overturned chair.

‘Did she hear aught?’ asked the farmer, when his wrist was bandaged and put in a sling.

‘Aye. She couldna help but hear.’

‘Yon lad’s like a madman.’

‘Dunna speak on’t, father. Hadst na thou better get to bed?’

‘Here he comes.’

There was the sound of John’s return to the back-door. They listened breathlessly, but he went upstairs to his room.

‘Ay! I’m fain he’s come in and gone t’ bed. It’s a load off my mind.’

‘Mother, I doubt we’ll have more trouble with that lad than ordinary.’

‘I’ve done my best wi’ him, father; thou’ll be laying it on me,’ said Mrs. Morrison, beginning to whimper.

‘Nay, nay, woman,’ said the old man wearily; ‘we’ll both take us shares. Now mop up thee tears, and just hearken to me.’

‘Aye, I’m hearkening.’

---

'Thou sees how it is wi' th' Squire?'

'I see nought but that his name's like a red rag to mad bulls.'

'Thou dost see, mother. Come, come! try and bear up, and hearken sensible.'

'Well?'

'Thou knows he'd niver have wanted to be cousins if it hadn't been for our bonnie lass?'

'Ay, but she *is* bonnie,' said Mrs. Morrison, drying her tears, and suddenly waking up to a woman's interest.

'Well, he sees it, as I always knowed he would. Bless yo! he'd niver have wanted us for cousins wi'out *her*.'

'Aye.'

'Now, if he wants her i' a straightforrard nanly sort o' way, let him fetch her, same as if she were a lady born and bred.'

'Ay, father! But I should be glad on't.'

'Of course thou wouldst. But there's to be no throwing o' my bonnie lass at his head; no, nor at any mon's, were he the king.'

'And who's going to throw her?' said

Mrs. Morrison, dropping easily into the injured frame.

‘Well, *thou* aren’t, and *I’m* not. Nor’s John.’

‘Ay! how *could* John ha’ spoke that word of her?’

‘He’ll not do it again i’ a hurry. But I doubt—I doubt, mother, we shall have some trouble wi’ him o’er this matter.’

‘What’s he shaping at, dost think?’

‘It comes o’er me at times that he thinks he has a claim on th’ property. Lord! he’s no more claim than this ’ere owd shoo.’

Farmer Morrison lifted the old iron shovel to illustrate John’s chances with the Devonporte estate. Mrs. Morrison raised her two hands and shook her head in contemptuous astonishment.

‘And thou thinks he’ll throw all he can i’ the way to prevent th’ Squire wedding our Marjorie?’

‘Come, come, woman! Thou’rt getting on at a rare rate. All *I’ve* said is: dunna throw her at his yed, but dunna let her think

as we're displeased wi' th' cousinship. We've no right, and I've no wish, t' talk o' more at present. But I'm a mon mysen, and I know as squires dunna go about claiming farmers' lasses for kin without they're passable i' looks.'

'Well, but if——'

'Now, mother, thou knows I'll have no talk made on't. Hoosht! What's yon?'

'It's th' lass hersen creeping downstairs like a mouse.'

Mrs. Morrison was right. The kitchen door opened softly, and Marjorie thrust in her beautiful head and sad wondering eyes. When she saw that her parents were alone, she stepped forward and shut the door. She had slipped her dress on over her night-gown, but her hair hung loose to her knees in lovely dishabille, and her bare white feet showed like marble on the sanded floor.

'Child, thou'll catch thy death!' cried Mrs. Morrison.

But Marjorie, putting her gently aside, passed swiftly to her father's chair, and

kneeling down by it, kissed the hand that hung in the sling. It was in her mind that one of his children had hurt him, and it wounded her heart almost as a sin of her own might have done.

‘Thou should na have left thy warm bed, lass,’ said the farmer, drawing her head to his breast with the unhurt arm.

‘I could na sleep, father. Canna I do aught for thee?’

‘I want nought but for my lass to be happy.’

‘Does thee arm hurt, dad?’ she asked, with a little sob.

‘Hurt? Why no, child. It’s the white handkercher as scares thee, I reckon. Women are so soft o’er a bit o’ a bandage. Come, kiss thy feyther.’

‘John couldn’t have meant——’ began Marjorie faintly.

‘No; he didn’t mean. I sort o’ did it mysen. Now don’t thee trouble. Thou loves thy dad?’

‘Oh, I do!’

---

'Well, John does too, at bottom, I make no doubt. And if thou loves thy feyther thou'll get t' bed and make no kind o' a trouble o'er this. And—Marjorie.'

'Aye, father.'

'John's just taken a dislike to th' Squire. But thou needna mind; he'll get over it. And I've only t' say to thee as thou'll not o'erstep th' mark wi' all this cousining.'

'Oh, dad!' said Marjorie, colouring violently, and remembering her cruel dispute with John; 'I've niver give thee cause!'

'A bit o' a warning, my lass, is na a re-proof. Thou's niver give me cause for a moment's disquiet o' any sort. But thou'll just hearken while I tell thee that thou'rt welcome to be cousin to th' Squire *under thy feyther's roof*, but thou'll keep i' mind thy difference o' station.'

'Aye, father,' replied Marjorie, somewhat bewildered, 'and John too.'

'John too,' replied Farmer Morrison, after a pause of a second or two. 'Good-night, my lass.'

Marjorie returned to her room somewhat comforted, and yet by no means happy. She got into bed, but when there, stretched out her young limbs and threw her arms above her head with the full intention of keeping awake to think the matter over.

People are not always sufficiently alive to the ignorance of youth, to the fact that each young creature has to grope his or her way through experience as though there had been nothing like it in life before. Marjorie was only a girl in her teens, and, with the exception of Zachary and an elderly man who had proposed for her when she was a mere child (and of which her indignant father had told her nothing), she had had no love declarations. It was by no means apparent to her that the Squire's warmth had trespassed beyond what was strictly cousinly. Perhaps had there been no relationship at the back she would have seen her way clearer; as it was, she was confused by the consciousness of that kinship, which from her earliest memory had been impressed upon her mind.


as the important romance of her life. Still, to-night she became aware that her own personality was more strictly associated with the Squire than was that of any other member of the family, and it made her vaguely uneasy. Then, although the absence of coquetry and vanity was a leading trait in her character, she was too sensible to carry her innocence to the verge of folly and rashness; she knew, at any rate, that she was a woman, that the Squire had offered her marked attentions, and that facts now almost forbade her to attribute them, as she had done, to his knowledge of their cousinship.

Nothing was clear to her; she was only troubled; and the veiled gravity which had underlaid her father's playful words was by no means consoling. Was any serious crisis in her young life arriving? A crisis of which the bare idea made her tremble, and which she felt giddily incapable of meeting? It had been all very well to struggle with the complications of her own feeling as she had done in the deserted quarry the day of



the thunderstorm ; she could meet her own inward trials by some plain resolve of the will ; but if all this turmoil was going to assume the aspect of an external fact, which needed a real decision, it was not so easy.

Above all, had she given her father any sort of promise—not by words, but by her passive silence ? Or if it was not a promise, any sort of mistaken idea that might seem to him afterwards something which she had not intended ? This cousinship—did she so greatly desire it ? Was she as ready as everyone had taken for granted ? Clearly she had wanted to go to the Hall—but then, was it all upon Derrick's account ? She thought of him as he had stood before her in the picture-gallery holding her hands, looking at her with his handsome face in a glow, and carrying her away from her discretion by the force of his eager words. When he was with her, his talk and his ways bore her with them ; when he was gone, she felt a recoil, and asked herself had her will consented or not.

 Marie tossed on her bed, unable to see

anything clearly, ashamed of her fears, and yet fearing all the more. Then she crushed her face upon the pillow, trying to bury with it another thought that was striving to struggle to the surface, and which her fierce young pride could not and would not permit. And so, crying a little, and incoherently praying, she fell asleep at last.

The next morning everything went on just as usual. John appeared at breakfast looking sulky and cowed, but on the whole behaved better than might have been expected. Farmer Morrison was short and stern with him, but there was no open quarrel, and Mrs. Morrison contented herself with putting on an invalid air and plaintive voice. These were dispersed every now and then by a sharp common-sense look and tone, as some practical matter came unavoidably before her. The Squire did not appear, and Marjorie congratulated herself upon getting through one day at least in peace when the evening arrived.

It was about five o'clock, and tea was

already over ; the farmer and John were out seeing after farm matters ; Mrs. Morrison put on the fatal gown and cap, and rustling into the ' parlour,' seated herself in majestic gloom with Jeremy Taylor and her spectacles lying on the table before her. Marjorie, who had been washing the china, was in the front kitchen, where, amidst the firelight and the soft afternoon rays, she moved about, replacing the cups and plates in the cupboard, and singing gently as she worked.

Presently there came a tap at the back-door. Marjorie, thinking it was a visitor for Sally, took no notice until she heard her own name softly called, close to her. She turned, and for a moment gazed with perplexity at the figure standing timidly upon the threshold. The face was Zachary's ; but where were the familiar blouse and corduroys ? He was dressed with care in the garb of a gentleman ; his wild brown locks had been carefully trimmed, and his beautiful dark face appeared above a small round collar and neat tie ; his

dress was in perfect taste, and yet it gave Marjorie a curious sense of disappointment. But she ran forward instantly, both hands outstretched, and her face full of an eager welcome.

‘ Ay, Zach ! It’s long since I’ve seen thee ! And *whativer* ?’

Pearse took her hands with a faint smile.

‘ Thou’rt just th’ same, Marjorie !’

‘ And why should I change ? It’s thee as is altered,’ added the girl, with a sense of hurt feeling she could not control or account for.

‘ Only my clothes.’

‘ But thy clothes, Zach ! I liked—well, no. I suppose these are best.’

‘ Maister Devonporte’s man ordered ’em for me at Maister Devonporte’s own tailor. Thou dost na know how this collar frets me.’

‘ Then thou dost na like ’em *all through*.’

‘ Nay ; not one.’

‘ Well ’—Marjorie experienced some relief—  
‘ thou looks grand i’ them, for all. Thou’ll get used to ’em.’

‘ Marjorie, dost know what I’ve come for ?’

‘To show me thy clothes?’ asked she faintly.

‘Thou dost na think such a thing!’ said he, with an indignant colour trembling in his face. ‘After weeks and weeks o’ keeping away, t’ think o’ coming up here t’ show thee my clothes! I’m come t’ say good-bye. I’m off by the night-mail to Lunnon.’

‘No, Zach!’ said Marjorie, with a sense that her hold upon peace and safety would vanish with him.

‘Come with me once more to the garden; but wrap thy shawl about thee. It’s autumn weather now.’

‘I’ll come with thee gladly.’

‘I’ve missed thee, Marjorie,’ said he, as they wandered down the long path again, where now the branches were almost bare, and the dead leaves decayed in the moist ground.

‘And I thee, Zach. But thy troubles are nigh over now. Thou’rt gotten a great start i’ life.’

It was wonderful how the presence of

Zachary brought with it a sense of ease and calm.

'Some of them. Marjorie, I cannot quite say what 'ud have happened to me if the Squire had na stretched out his hand to help me. I were come to a point when my course lay between two kinds o' suicide—the suicide o' my body on the one hand, or my spirit upon t' other. Thou understands?'

'Aye, Zach ; I allays understand thee.'

'All except i' one way, my lass,' he replied gravely and sadly. 'And thou knows that the suicide o' the body is a sin. Folks don't seem t' mind so much about other kinds o' suicide, though they make a rare moil over that one.'

'Very like it's because they don't see the others.'

'Aye, lass ; that's it. They don't see when a man's soul gets starved or killed. Well—I'd made up my mind to take the only course left ; t' break up my pictures, as I'd sold my books—to give up being everything I wanted and thirsted for, and just to stick to the quarrying. "It's dogged as does it," says I

to mysen. And at th' very moment as I'd concluded that I'd got the strength, and were beginning to smash, the Squire puts his hand o' my shoulder, and tells me as my sculptures were worth money—even them that I'd already done.'

'Were na it wunnerful, Zach? I've niver heard the tale before,' said Marjorie wistfully.

'It were wunnerful. And he did it all so kind and manly. But I could na think o' him at first. I could see nothing but the way that had opened to me—the wide way after my great extremity.'

'Did he tell thee at once that he'd send thee to Lunnon?'

'Not at first; that came after. That were great, of course; but not so great as being told that my thoughts and my sculptures were worthy i' the eyes of others, and might be the work o' my life.'

They were seated in the harbour now, and Zachary looked up with a strange rapture in his face. Marjorie was struck by the contrast

between this look and the one he had worn when they sat together here the last time. She was thankful; and yet some regret quivered in her heart, to think that her friend and lover could have so large a joy in which she had no manner of share; it was nothing exacting or jealous that she felt, but rather a sense of forlornness. Had Zachary known it, he had never been so near making her love him as when he lifted his face in her presence with a rapture upon it in which the thought of her had no part. And yet he was not near.

Marjorie was not one to pause over a personal emotion; shaking herself free from the momentary depression, she threw herself at once into her friend's experience.

'I'm main glad,' she said, 'of all that's happened to thee, Zachary. I'm glad that thou'lt see Lunnon, and hear the wonderful things there, even though it takes away a friend from us.'

'Thou knows thou'st taken the sting out o' the parting. I doubt if I could have lived on



in Hollyss. But hast thou nothing to tell me o' thyself? We shanna talk like this again.'

'Aye, Zach. I want to ask thee something. Dost think, when folk get i' that dark way such as thou did, that a something *always* comes to lift 'em out o' it?'

Instead of replying, Zachary started and turned and looked at her searchingly. Her hands were folded, and there was an outward calm upon her face, but his lover's eyes were keen.

'My lass!' said he gently.

'Yes, Zachary.'

'I said thou wert na altered. But thou art. Thy face used to be still and peaceful as a deep pool; but now there's a trouble in it.'

'No, lad,' said Marjorie, with regal quiet, feeling that he trespassed too near.

'There is,' replied the man gently, with the courage which love and parting gave him; 'and it makes me wish to say something to thee.'

'Thou can speak; I do not say that I can answer.'

‘Well, then ; it’s same as if I see it in thy look, that thou’rt removed further than iver from me—from my love, that is—but that thou needs, as thou did na before, a quiet friend like I were.’

The girl’s face quivered, but she repressed her emotion.

Zachary went on :

‘Wilt trust me, Marjorie, and keep the thought o’ me *as a friend* ? I said it—I mean friendship—could na be. But it can if thou needs it. Wilt promise me ?’

‘To trust thee ? Aye, easily, lad.’

‘Yes ; but more than that.’

‘What is the more ?’

‘Niver to think that thou’s tried my love too much ; but, if thou needs it, to call me to thee again—*as a friend*, I mean.’

Marjorie turned her lovely face and swimming eyes upon him.

‘I could na, lad ; thou’d be thinking——’

‘No,’ said Zachary, with grave decision ;

‘I shall *never* think you love me.’

The girl put her hand up hastily and con-

cealed the burning blush that suddenly suffused her cheek.

‘I take it that thou hast promised. And as to that which thou asked me, I canna say for sure. Some has to travel o’er a darker road than others. Lord send *thy* path may niver be dark! But I reckon that when folk stick hard to what seems to ’em right and best, there’s a way things have o’ working round after all and coming up sunshiny i’ the end. It’s best i’ th’ long-run not to think too much about what’s like t’ happen to us, but just to go right on wi’ a main belief i’ the goodness o’ things i’ the lump. I’m saying this to thee, my lass, wi’ a queer sort o’ sense that it were thee as set me i’ the right way when I got wrong. And thou hast na got wrong. Thou’s somehow gotten a scare?’

‘No, lad, no; but I like thy talk.’

‘Well! thou winna tell me. And how should thou jump right into th’ middle o’ things all at once? A woman’s silence is often sweeter to a mon than words; and all

thou does or doesn't do seems somehow sweet to me.'

'Zach, thou'rt so kind and forgiving.'

'Am I?' said he, turning his eyes upon her. 'I reckon I shall niver see thy like again. But now I must go, my dear lass. And thou'll not forget me?'

'Niver—niver!' said the girl, rising from her seat.

He took her hand, and lifted his cap with the good feeling natural to him; but when he next spoke he avoided her eyes.

'Th' Squire's recognised thee as his kin, he tells me. He'll lend thee books now and teach thee—far better than iver I did; thou wilt na want. But should thou need a plain friend, think o' me. Good-bye, Marjorie. It's all in a hurry like, but it's best so. There's something I'd like t' ask for, but I doubt whether I'd be right to beg for it—but let me kiss thy hand.'

He stooped down and lifted it to his lips before she could speak, turned out of the harbour, and walked away. Marjorie stood

watching the familiar and yet strangely unfamiliar figure; she felt forlorn, and the reference to the Squire had chilled her inexpressibly; Zachary was gone, and even Zachary had not understood. And then, as she saw him stand talking for a few minutes with her father before finally vanishing, she asked herself whether it would not have been a good thing if she could have responded to his love by giving him her own, and so have shut herself for ever from turmoil in a safe and settled peace.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### A READING LESSON.

'Oh, my love's like the melodie,  
That's sweetly played in tune.'

BURNS.

**T**HE Squire came the next day, and many times after that. Soon his figure was almost as familiar an one at the farm as Zachary's had been. He came in and out as only a privileged guest can, careless of the footmarks he made upon the spotless kitchen floor, and often bringing Bel with him to leave canine impressions of himself wherever he happened to lie down. Mrs. Morrison began to include the 'mopping up' after Derrick and his dog as a regular item of household affairs ; but she did so very

cheerfully. By-and-by, as the winter settled in dreary and severe as the summer had been bright, other changes were to be remarked in the household ; they were slight in themselves, but indicated much. Marjorie's bookshelves—the shelves where Zachary's pathetic scarcity of books once lay—were filled with volumes ; so were the cases in the ' parlour.' More than this ; a fire was constantly lighted there, and a great deal of Marjorie's household work was taken from her—to be cheerfully assumed by her mother in her place—in order that she might sit at her leisure studying the books which the Squire had brought her to read. All this was very delightful to Marjorie. She did not give up her dairy-work—it would have been difficult, indeed, to make her do so—nor would she resign her perpetual stocking-knitting, and in summer it would have been hard to keep her indoors ; but in the winter-time, thanks to her habit of early rising, she had plenty of leisure, and was thankful to use it in satisfying some of her craving after information and beautiful


thoughts. It was only a following up of the work she had begun under Zachary's instruction, and for which she had already shown so great an aptitude ; and both in her case and his it was because their minds were fresh and unobscured by custom or prevalent opinion, that the lofty ideas upon which they had fed took root readily and put forth new and original shoots.

Marjorie was very happy during these months ; the days flew by in the fresh interest ; and the absorbing nature of her pursuits lulled her anxiety, and prevented her from thinking of much else than the matter before her. Soon she got accustomed to Derrick's constant presence : there was nothing in his manner to reawaken the vague disturbance she had felt on the one occasion—indeed, she almost forgot it ; the trouble had cleared away, as obscure troubles very often do, and she accepted the new relationship simply, as was natural to her. If she thought about it at all, it was to congratulate herself upon her father's improved cheerfulness and John's



general good conduct. It is true that her brother avoided the kitchen upon the occasions when the Squire came in and sat down and made them merry with his tales ; but he never said or did anything to draw special attention to his own state of discontent, and this was as much as could be hoped for.

Derrick had a wonderful way of making himself at home in new conditions, a graceful manner of putting others at their ease that was very charming. Mrs. Morrison ceased at last, when she heard his step, to flutter with agitation concerning 'the parlour' and clean doyleys, and left off a tendency towards the moire antique and mauve cap and sitting in state. One day she even appeared from the back kitchen with her sleeves turned up and her clogs on, just to give him a smile of welcome, and then Derrick felt that his triumph was complete. But though he studiously concealed such of his habits as would have produced the least constraint, an observant person might have noticed that he



never for one moment relaxed his standard of gentlemanly refinement.

Marjorie felt this subtle grace of tone and speech and gesture intensely ; it was a perpetual source of pleasure to her, and by-and-by she began to correct turns and modes of expression which she observed he never used, to discard little habits which she fancied he disliked, and to curb her fervent desire to wait upon him when she remarked that he always received her services with an air of embarrassment and surprise. But all this was mere imitative faculty ; it sprang from her instinct of self-improvement, and never for a second did she suspect that he was deliberately educating her.

He managed very cleverly, and with consummate tact, it must be allowed : when she entered the room bearing a tray, he would rise from his seat, without looking her way and without ceasing his conversation with her father, and somehow unostentatiously ease her of the burden and do half the work.

The first time such a thing happened Mrs.

Morrison started from her seat in horror, moire antique and all, and Farmer Morrison uttered an incoherent demur ; but Derrick dropped back on his chair with a careless ' Oh, it's all right ! ' and plunged again into the talk in a masterful headstrong way which there was no resisting.

To Marjorie it was subtly delightful ; and Farmer Morrison, on thinking it over afterwards, concluded that this was a mode of courtship, or ' cousining,' which had hitherto not come under his observation, but of which on the whole he approved. By-and-by Derrick ventured to assume a greater amount of candour in hinting at what he considered desirable.

One evening Marjorie sat expecting him with a palpitating anxiety which she had never experienced before. A week earlier he had sent her his first present ; there appeared nothing in the least remarkable to the girl in his doing so, only the nature of it perplexed her. It was a dress ; neither a blue linsey nor a black silk, nor yet a red merino, nor a

print, nor any of those materials with which she was familiar. It was the finest, softest cashmere, of a subdued but lovely hue, which in her eyes appeared little short of miraculous; and the gift had been accompanied by a dressmaker—not from Milltown, but from a city of which Marjorie had heard but never seen—who had orders to make it after a certain pattern of Derrick's choosing. And to-night it had come home, and Marjorie was told by her mother that she must certainly put it on, or he would be disappointed when he arrived.

'It must have cost him pounds and pounds,' said Marjorie to herself, as she sat in 'the parlour,' ostensibly reading, but really thinking about the dress; 'and a linsey or a merino would have pleased me just as well, and suited me better. Only to think of the lace at the throat and wrists! Dear, dear! I hardly dare *breathe*, it's so lovely! Ay, I wish Zachary could see me now!—no, I don't. There's them I wouldn't for *worlds* should see me!'

And then she sat still again, feeling infinitely too coarse and red and large for the garment she wore, and imagining that perhaps Lavinia Pearse might have matched it better, and looking all the time so beautiful that a painter might have begged her on his knees to let him make her into a picture.

Then Derrick arrived. He left Bel tied up in the barn, and came on eagerly through the back and front kitchens, and straight to the parlour. He opened the door, and remained for a second or two wondering upon the threshold.

He had forgotten the dress ; he saw nothing but that, instead of the familiar Marjorie, an exquisitely lovely and stately lady stood upon the hearth before him, with a bewitchingly modest blush colouring her cheeks, and an unaccountable timidity in her lustrous eyes. Then he recollected, and his heart leapt up with joy.

‘ Oh, Marjorie,’ said he, with a sigh, ‘ how beautiful you are !’

‘ It’s the dress,’ replied the girl simply.



‘Mother made me put it on to show you. It was kind of you to send me such a wonderful present, only I’m thinking——’

‘What are you thinking?’ for she had paused.

‘That it’s too fine and delicate for a farmer’s lass—*daughter*, I should say—and altogether too good.’

‘Too good! As if anything could be—— well! no matter. I think it’s just right. I’d no idea I could have hit it off so well.’

‘And made *long*, and this lace, Master Derrick!’

‘I’m glad if you like it.’

‘Well, you may be sure I shall take care of it, and never trail it in the mud; indeed, I shall keep it in a drawer by itself.’

‘Keep it in a drawer? Indeed you must not! You must wear it every day.’

‘Master Derrick! I couldn’t have the conscience,’ said Marjorie, in her most decided manner.

‘I’ll find the conscience,’ said Derrick, laughing.

And then he stepped back, and, having an excuse in the new dress, gazed at her rapturously, and concluded in his own mind that no peer's daughter ever looked so sweet, so maidenly, or so refined, as his beautiful unspoiled Marjorie. But these were the thoughts which it was, at present, dangerous to allow; and he turned resolutely away.

‘Now shall we not get to our books? Have you done anything this week?’

Marjorie produced some pens and ink, and a manuscript from a drawer; as she moved about the room, Derrick covertly watched her, and found that no action, no turn of her figure jarred him; she managed her long robe perfectly, and the movement of her arms was always lovely; he wondered whether the harmonious effect was induced by perpetual butter-making, or what it was that gave the soft and gracious majesty to her every motion. Then she came and seated herself with demure dignity on the chair which the Squire handed to her. She was quite accustomed now to

his scrupulous politeness, and enjoyed the touch of stateliness it gave her life. Derrick seated himself near her.

‘The worst of it is,’ said he, looking critically at the manuscript, ‘that my teaching results in your writing a most manly hand! I’m not at all sure that something finer—more ladylike—would not be better.’

‘Nay!’ said Marjorie earnestly; ‘I could never do with anything small and finnikin. I like your clear large letters, and I’m sure they’ll suit the few things I shall ever have to say better than aught else.’

‘Marjorie,’ said Derrick gravely, ‘you began your sentence with “Nay,” and you left it off with “aught.”’

‘Did I? I should have said “No,” and I should have said “anything,”’ said Marjorie, correcting herself laboriously.

‘But about the handwriting?’

‘I’d rather write like you than like—Miss Clementina, for instance.’

‘And why do you object to Miss Clementina’s handwriting?’



‘I never saw it. I’m only thinking,’ said Marjorie, blushing a little, ‘what a flow and tangle o’ words she speaks with, and nothing much said at the end.’

‘All right,’ said Derrick, laughing again; ‘we’ll keep to the manly hand, then. But, as a rule, Marjorie, you must not give your opinion about ladies quite so openly and decidedly.’

‘Oh!’ cried Marjorie fervently, ‘*have* I offended you, Master Derrick?’

‘Me? No, no! I’m only giving you a general warning. You may say what you like to me, *always*.’

‘Thank you. That’s very kind. I shan’t get into trouble then, for father and mother let me say what I like, too. I’ve learned this, Master Derrick.’

She handed him a book.

‘Will you repeat it?’

The volume was Milton’s ‘Paradise Lost,’ and it was open at the First Book, at the magnificent passage beginning:

---

‘He above the rest,  
In shape and gesture proudly eminent,  
Stood like a tower.’

The part of the lesson which Derrick liked best was when Marjorie repeated the poetry she loved to commit to memory. She had a fine ear and a most sensitively sympathetic soul, so that when she recited, her accent was almost lost in a quick sense of the music of the words; while her face glowed and her eyes flashed with enthusiasm. Derrick had been astonished at her aptitude in correcting her own errors of speech, and imitating his mode when it came to poetry. She caught up what he meant directly, and as to the sense and spirit, often revealed something to him which he had not perceived before. As she sat to-night with her head raised above its frame of soft lace, with all the emotions excited by the poem passing swiftly over her face, and her rich full voice modulating itself to her feelings, Derrick, lost to the sense of all save her beauty and her sympathetic tones, watched her, with the book slipping idly from

his hands, until the ceasing of her voice roused him after the words :

‘Thrice he essay’d, and thrice, in spite of scorn,  
Tears, such as angels weep, burst forth.’

Then she was silent for a minute or two.

‘Marjorie,’ said the Squire presently, ‘you think that a grand passage?’

‘Master Derrick,’ she said, almost in a whisper, ‘I cannot tell what those last lines make me feel. How could he make such a picture in a word or two of what a soul can suffer? Is it in the music of ’em, think you, or the lines themselves, or what has gone before? But don’t you see the ruin of it, and the pity of it, and the terrible despair? Oh!’ she pressed her hand to her breast with a sigh, ‘it makes me want to weep mysen, only that I canna for my awe.’

Derrick had never felt inclined to cry over the passage; he had been given it to scan, to paraphrase, to learn at school, and had shown it to Marjorie from the force of habit as a good lesson.

‘I think it’s very wonderful,’ he answered;

‘but then, of course, the whole thing is imaginary.’

‘No, it is na!’ cried Marjorie, with sudden energy. ‘Zach used to say, when anything in a book touched us deep and drew the tears from my eyes, “That’s very real, lass. Depend on’t, when things come close and make us *feel*, th’ mon’s writ it out o’ experience—somebody’s felt it once, and somebody ’ull feel it again.” I think he was right, Master Derrick.’

‘Perhaps so, Marjorie. I dare say he was right. Zachary had clear thoughts. Only it does not do to look at things too closely.’

‘Why not?’

‘Well, it makes us sad, for one thing.’

‘Aye! it makes us sad,’ said Marjorie, in a soft reflective voice, almost to herself.

And then Derrick suddenly discerned that she was slipping away from him, getting into thoughts in which he had no part, and which he could not follow; and he felt somewhat pained.

‘Marjorie,’ said he, looking at her wistfully, ‘shall we go on with the lesson?’

‘Please, sir,’ she answered, turning her eyes rather dreamily upon him.

‘And what will you learn next?’

‘Oh, read to me! I like to listen to you, and then I can say the words as you do.’

Derrick smiled: the momentary shadow was passing away.

‘I will read at the end,’ said he, inwardly determining that it should be something less deep and tragical; ‘but first we should do something else.’


‘Yes; the French. And I wrote the answers to the history questions you set me.’

‘From memory?’

‘Yes.’

‘That’s first-rate. Marjorie, you get on splendidly. How long have we been at it?’

‘Since last October—and now it is March—the end of March. Sir, I am so grateful to you for teaching me.’



‘Oh, nonsense! It’s my greatest pleasure; and you know it, my —— I mean, you are aware of it, Marjorie. And this must positively be the last time that I have to reprove you for calling me sir.’

‘It shall indeed. I see it vexes you.’

‘And now for the French. Had you not better sit by me at the table? We have but one book,’ ventured Derrick.

Marjorie complied. The Squire’s pulses beat quicker. Her hand, whiter and softer than it used to be, lay near him: he might have found a thousand excuses for touching it. But his heart was filled with reverence as well as love, and as he turned and looked at her, and saw the queenly head and pure profile, and the patient trustful way in which she bent over her book, he renounced all such ideas as unfit and paltry, and instead, inwardly registered a vow somehow to become a better man.

Then the French lesson began. It was broken by constant bursts of laughter at Marjorie’s mistakes, and her groans over

the unmanageable pronunciation. Like two merry children, they laughed and learned until the clatter of plates in the next room warned them that it was supper-time.

‘Oh dear, it’s supper!’ said Marjorie regretfully.

‘I’m always so sorry when it’s over,’ confided Derrick.

‘We *must* go. Show me how much for next time, and then.’

‘Now, Marjorie, I *have* told you that “and then,” at the end of a sentence, is quite wrong.’

‘Oh, Master Derrick! If I only could have a little hinge in my tongue that would just refuse to move whenever I wanted to speak the dialect.’

And so, talking naturally together, they opened the door that led into the kitchen, and stood on the threshold turning towards each other, Marjorie now at ease in her pretty dress, animated and happy.

There were two doors in the kitchen; one leading into the passage and again into the

parlour. It was in this one that Marjorie and Derrick stood. They had left the parlour door open, and there was a full blaze of light before and behind them. The other door led into the back kitchen. Farmer Morrison and John were alone in the kitchen : the latter was seated by the fire. He bestowed a glance upon his sister and the Squire as they entered ; and when he saw Marjorie's attire, swept his eyes slowly over her figure, and turned back to the hearth without a word, but with a certain deepening of the sulky dogged lines of his face. Farmer Morrison was interested in his paper, and having an opinion that lovers were best left to themselves, did not look up at their entrance. At that moment there was a slight increase of the noise of steps and talking in the back kitchen ; an electric change came over John's face, and springing to his feet, he darted forward and threw open the door. His father, however, followed him in an instant, and laid his hand heavily upon his shoulder. John shrank back to his seat, and allowed the farmer to pass into the back



kitchen before him : he did so, closing the door carefully. Marjorie, however, with the smile still bright and full upon her lips, had turned her head to see what was happening, and from the darkness of the back kitchen she caught sight, for one brief second, of a face. It was white and distraught with anguish, and the wild eyes looked across her father's shoulders straight into hers. It flashed and was gone with the closing door. An instant afterwards her father, with a perfectly undisturbed air, came back. John, however, rose and went out, and did not return.

Marjorie broke from Derrick and walked forward unsteadily a step or two.

‘Father! Who——’

‘My lass?’ said he kindly, looking quietly into her face.

‘I thought I saw—in the back kitchen——’ she spoke with hesitation, and was staring rather blankly at him.

‘There’s Sally there, and a labourer or two. Thou wants to help thy mother, maybe?’

He spoke very gently, in his usual caress-

ing way, and walking towards the back kitchen, opened the door for her again. There was a dull and commonplace picture of Sally lighting the gas, and the backs of two labourers bending over a hamper of potatoes. Marjorie made an eager step or two forward ; but half-way across the kitchen she paused, reared her neck with proud self-scorn, and deliberately turned again. Derrick was standing by the supper-table, patiently waiting by her chair until she chose to sit down. A moment later they were all gathered round the table, and he was cutting her bread and pouring out the water for her, and turning his handsome mirth-filled face towards her. Marjorie smiled at his talk and answered him ; but throughout the evening she did not quite recover the brightness of her former tone.

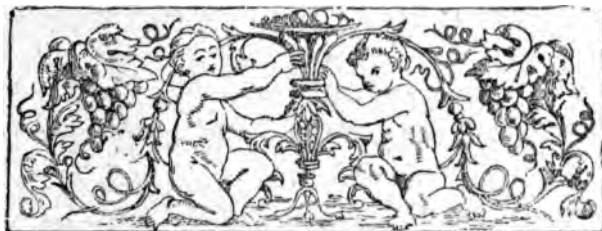
When the hour came for Derrick to leave, he reminded them that this was the last evening he could pass with them for the present, as he had to spend the next few weeks in London.

‘I shall see Zachary,’ said he. And then there were a host of messages given him to carry; and so, amid smiles and bright farewells, he bade adieu to the Cockshuthey Farm for the present.

As he walked home his heart was full of the happiness of the evening he had passed with Marjorie; he had room for merriment, for light fancies, for hopeful pictures of future relations.

‘I shall never have occasion to be otherwise than supremely proud of her,’ he murmured fervently; ‘but how on earth am I to teach her the Peerage, and rules of precedence, and all that humbug!’

From which last speech it may be observed that the Squire of Hollyss was getting sadly deteriorated by his familiar acquaintance with the family of Cockshuthey.



## CHAPTER XX.

### IN THE DESERTED QUARRY.

‘All that is truly amiable is God, or as it were a divided piece of Him, that retains a reflex or shadow of Himself.’—SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

**T**HE day on which Derrick departed for London was a genial March morning. It found Marjorie up early, her thoughts more occupied with household affairs than would have pleased the young Squire on this occasion of their first real parting. But Marjorie, placid and cheerful, was to be seen at eight o'clock neatly packing in a basket the whole store of winter's knitting which it was her intention to carry to the shop at Milltown that morning. Then she pinned a small shawl about

her neck, and tied a handkerchief under her chin, in the manner adopted in the country.

The weather was still cold, but it was mellow with the coming spring, and exercise would keep her young frame warm enough. She went out with her basket on her arm, and lifting her face to catch the full benefit of morning light and air, considered that in the copse near the deserted quarry the anemones would be out, and in the field beyond the daffodils would already have sprung up. In pursuit of these wild dainties of the early spring, she took the path up the garden and went on through the long lonely lane, walking leisurely, and turning her head from side to side to see whether upon either hedge there were anything worth gathering.

How still it was ! Marjorie's steps made little sound upon the moist earth ; she fancied she could almost hear the fresh blades springing under her feet ; the air was full of subtle sounds of growing life, of mating birds, of tremulous catkins and young green shoots meeting the first kiss of the breeze. Afar off


at Christie's farm a man was ploughing in a field, driving his team before him with the cracking sound of a long whip ; at this distance it was impossible to make out the ploughman's figure ; it might be Mr. Christie's young son ; it might be——

Marjorie leaned her basket upon a low wall and stood looking towards the field. There was a mournful wistfulness in her beautiful deep eyes, a flush of colour in her cheeks, a beat in her heart of expectant life. Near her, to the left, was the deserted quarry, whose gloomy side she was about to enter ; it looked wilder and lonelier than ever this morning—a torn and ragged disfigurement of the hill, with fantastic heaps of stone and *débris* around, blackened by exposure to the weather, here and there moss-covered or overgrown with weeds and brambles, but mostly lying stark and bare.

As Marjorie waited, a crow swooped suddenly from the fissure and swept past her into the valley below ; the momentary beating of its wings and the hoarse cry made the

silence deeper when it had passed. Marjorie took up her basket again, and went slowly on, bending her head and picking her steps quietly, as though with the fear of making too much noise. She was in the quarry now, and looked up and about her with a vivid recollection of the stormy occasion of grief upon which she had last visited it. There was nothing around her but the great grey rock, the uneven frowning fissures, the extraordinary stillness.

Marjorie had a fancy, instead of passing straight onwards, to visit the rock upon which she had cast herself in her passion of grief that day; and so, still bending her head and picking her steps, she went farther into the gap until, led by the tiny sound of trickling moisture, she found the spot where ferns and mosses made the place into a grotto. Here she paused. It seemed to her that besides the slight dropping noise there was another sound that did not mingle naturally with it, but that turned the silence into something mournful and dreadful.



Could it be the slow southing of wind through a cleft in the rock? It was too human for that, too irregular, too eloquent; it was like the sound of a great weeping; and to the girl, who was too much startled to know whether she should proceed or turn back, it seemed a strange phantom of the very grief which she had expended upon this spot, the grief whose memory had caused her to revisit it; only this crying was not like a woman's; the sobs were not sharp, abandoned, and continuous, but slow and repressed—the unwilling unaccustomed tribute to a great agony.

She made up her mind to proceed. A step or two brought her within sight of the block of stone upon which she remembered to have cast herself, and now lying upon it she saw the figure of a man. It was impossible to discover who it was, or indeed whether it was one of the villagers or a stranger; the head in the abandonment of grief hung almost over the stone, and the arms were flung around it; she could not even see the colour



of the hair, though the quiver of the frame every time one of the sobs tore it was plainly discernible.

Marjorie, shocked at the sight of the secret grief upon which she had intruded, stood rooted to the spot, unable to decide whether to retreat or to discover herself. The man made no sign of being aware of anyone's presence; and the misery which was intended for no human spectator lay revealed before her in its unrestrained intensity. Whoever and whatever this human creature was, whether it was crime, or sorrow, or need that had caused him to fling himself there, she could not forsake him now that she had found him.

Advancing, therefore, with beating heart, she bent over him, murmuring a few compassionate words, and laying her hand lightly upon his shoulder.

The man started to his feet as if he had been stung, and Marjorie, uttering a low cry, shrank backwards. The misery-haunted face was the one which she had seen on the

evening before, and it was Abel Greenhough's.

The two stared silently at each other; then the man passed his hand over his eyes with a bewildered air, and looking at her again, murmured her name.

'Abel!' cried Marjorie, dropping her basket and stretching her hands out towards him, 'I heard thee crying!'

'My lass,' said he gently, 'don't let that disturb thee. Folks have their times o' weary sadness, thou knows. I'd no idea that anyone was nigh.'

'Abel!' reiterated the girl, with the ring of sharp pain through her voice, 'for *thee* to cry!'

'Well, well,' replied he wearily, 'strong men have their moments o' weakness.'

He stooped down as he spoke and began mechanically to pick up the scattered wares. But his fingers trembled violently, and he could scarcely fold the things and replace them in the basket. Marjorie watched him without seeing anything; she was pressing

her hands against her side ; she strove vainly to master some overwhelming emotion, and, when Greenhough looked up again, the tears were streaming unheeded down her cheeks.

‘ My lass,’ said he, rising hastily, ‘ *don’t* take on. I canna bear to see thee cry. I thought thou wert happy, Marjorie. Thou’rt glad to marry the Squire ? I’m glad thou’rt happy, indeed I am. *Don’t, don’t* take on so. It’s right and fit that thou should marry Devonporte. I’m glad, Marjorie.’

He spoke with wild hurry, scarcely knowing what he said.

‘ Oh !’ cried the girl faintly. Then she made a pitiful effort to take her basket up, stretched her hands blindly out without touching it, swerved to one side, and would have fallen, but that Greenhough’s arms were instantly around her.

The man looked down desperately upon her white face and closed eyes ; she suffered his support because she could not help it, but her face was turned away from him.

‘ Marjorie,’ whispered he in the same wild

hurry, 'what is it? Look at me. Let me see thy face.'

He drew her closer with one arm as he spoke, so as to free the other, and ruthlessly removed the hands with which she had covered her face. Marjorie turned, opened her eyes, and looked up at him.

'Tell me,' he cried, with a great tremble in his voice, 'what thou means! Don't torture me, lass. If thou'rt to be Devon-porte's wife I'll go away and never trouble thee or see thee again. Only tell me plainly that thou dost na love me.'

She broke suddenly away from him, and stood before him, looking up with doubt and surprise in her eyes.

'I do not understand thee. Who says aught o' my marrying the Squire?'

'It was John,' answered he eagerly.

'Oh, Abel! Was it *thee* last night? Didst see me?' cried the girl.

'I saw thee, my lass. Why dost tremble and weep?'

She made no reply, and the man, ap-

proaching her, took her hand firmly in his and looked in her face.

‘Thou art going to marry the Squire?’

‘No, no!’

‘It was some mistake?’


‘Aye, a mistake.’

‘Oh, Marjorie, Marjorie!’ cried he, reeling back in the sudden revulsion of his feeling; ‘I thought last night I must have died in my great woe. I’ve lain upon that stone all night to battle with my grief. I did not know the morning had come. I niver meant to tell thee yet, my own lass, how great my love is; and I scarce dare ask thee if thou couldst try and love me ever so little in return.’

She withdrew her hand and stood facing him again; her lips were parted, her eyes downcast, her bosom heaving, and her colour coming and going.

‘Give me an answer!’ asked the man imploringly.

Then she raised her head, and looking at him gravely and unflinchingly, said:



‘God help me, Abel Greenhough ! for I *do* love thee.’

The man gave an incoherent cry of joy, and stretched his arms out towards her. But she evaded him.

‘Come to me, Marjorie ! Don’t stand there, looking like a wild bird that I can never tame ! Come to me. Say that thou’lt be my wife !’

‘I cannot come to thee, Abel ; I cannot be thy wife.’

‘Marjorie !’

‘Not any man’s wife but thine shall I ever be. But yet not thine.’

‘My lass, if thou loves me thou *must* be my wife. What canst thou mean ? Thou saidst that thou loved me.’

‘Oh, I love thee ! I love thee !’ moaned the girl, turning distractedly aside.

‘Then here thou shalt rest,’ cried Abel, gathering her suddenly to his breast. ‘I cannot take denial now. But thou shalt tell me what thou means i’ thy own time. Only tell me !’

The girl made a faint effort to free herself, and then, yielding to the tenderness of his voice and words, turned sobbing towards him, and laid her head upon his breast.

‘Thou shalt tell me thy trouble and thy meaning i’ thy own time,’ repeated Abel, trembling exceedingly. ‘Sit down with me, on the stone.’

They sat down upon the stone, Marjorie suffering him to hold her until her sobs were a little subdued; then she withdrew from his arms, and sat by him, looking wearily into the sky. He leaned his head upon his hand, and gazed thoughtfully at her.

‘Thou’lt tell me all now?’

‘Aye. There’s none to tell it to but thee.’

‘Thou has na loved me for long, Marjorie?’

‘A weary time, Abel—a weary time!’

‘And why dost thou tell me that i’ one breath, making the day tremble wi’ joy, and then i’ the next darken it with the other?’ he asked with gentle reproach; ‘maybe it’s because o’ thy father?’

‘Not all of it.’

‘Not all?’ Abel’s face was curiously sad and patient. ‘We’re sort o’ outlaws, are my uncle and myself, and thy father feels it with the rest? And thou’s been brought up to think wrong o’ me; and yet thou’s loved me. I doubt thou’s suffered, my poor lassie; it’s a terrible pain. I doubt I’ve been wrong to thee.’

‘Oh, Abe!’ cried Marjorie, looking down with her eyes full of tears, ‘how good, how gentle thou art to me! And I say nothing but hard things to thee.’

‘Thou must just open thy heart to me,’ said he, folding his arms quietly; ‘there should be nothing hid between us now. If it were best for *thee* that I should say “Good-bye” for ever, I believe I could have strength to do it. Only it must be made plain to me before I’ll give up my right in thee.’

‘Oh!’ cried Marjorie, shivering, ‘I canna bear that word “Good-bye.”’

He turned his face gently towards her.



‘Trust me, Marjorie. Tell me all, and let us look at it together.’

‘My father, if he knew I loved thee, would be ready almost to curse me. But I could bear that, Abel, for thy sake. I could—though I dearly dearly love my father; I should hope that in time he would come to know thee and trust thee better, and be reconciled to our marriage. What I cannot—dare not face, is the upbraidal o’ my own conscience, the sense that I might wed thee and for ever feel alone.’

‘Marjorie,’ said he gently, and looking more puzzled than hurt, ‘I should na have asked thee to wed me had I not believed that I could make thee a happy wife. Do you think it *possible* that you could ever want for love? To such a love as mine it seems the wildest, strangest o’ notions.’

‘Oh, Abel, I know. Thy wife ’ud be happy enough i’ one way. Dost think I don’t know it only too well?’

‘Thou hast na got it into thy head as I’ve more share o’ wickedness than most men?’

---

‘I should niver have loved thee,’ cried Marjorie, with proud energy, ‘had I not known that thou wast the kindest and gentlest and bravest o’ men.’

‘My lass,’ said Abel, smiling, ‘I wish my own conscience could answer to that. What is it, then?’

‘Abel, my very soul turns cold when I think that they say thou dost na believe i’ the God I love. No marriage could be a marriage with me unless I knew that thou as well as I had felt His blessing upon it. Thou may think me a coward. But I *dare* not wed without God’s blessing.’

She had spoken with the deep solemnity with which she had confessed her love. And now, folding her hands upon her knees, she looked upwards with her tear-stained face; it was unutterably sad, but full of a steady quiet resolve. There was silence between them. Marjorie had an intense anxiety for Abel’s reply; she had hoped that he might deny the charge; each moment that passed without his speaking was a moment of mar-

tyrdom to her ; but she would not hurry him by look or word, or add or take away from what she had said.

‘ Is that all ? ’ he asked presently.

‘ Yes.’

‘ But, Marjorie,’ he said gently, and still with that faint suspicion of perplexity running through his voice, ‘ thou’lt never let *that* divide us ? I believe in Christ.’

She turned to look upon him searchingly, a rapturous surprise dawning in her face. He took the hand which she had involuntarily laid upon his arm, and said :

‘ Wilt listen to me patiently, and try to understand me ? ’

‘ Oh, Abel ! my patience could never be tired, and I *shall* understand.’

‘ I so fear to deceive thee by word or hint. I have so rarely spoken of these things. I’ thy presence my soul fair struggles to be true more than ordinary. Thou art so true thyself. But I’lt watch my words, and try to explain.’

‘ Aye, Abe—dear Abe ! ’

---

‘ Bless thee for that word !’ said he gravely and tenderly. ‘ It is true what men say of me, in a sense. I do not believe in their God—not in the God that I’ve heard mostly preached about i’ the churches. Listen, Marjorie. Ever since I can remember, I’ve seen the folks who believed in that God turning against my uncle and myself, and even my mother, and treating us as if we were outcasts and had no share in the common right of human respect and love. When I was a little lad they used to stone me as I came from school, and cry after me, “ He’s Old Scrag’s boy !” and at school I’ve often borne a punishment as wasn’t my due, because, when the right lad wouldn’t confess, the master used to say, “ Depend upon it, it’ll be Old Scrag’s boy that has done it.” Many a time,’ said Abel, smiling, ‘ I’ve stood on the form with the dunce’s cap on my head and my back sore from a beating which I’d never merited, and in my heart such a dark turmoil o’ trouble as I can scarce abear to think on now.’

Marjorie suddenly crept nearer him.


‘The worst on’t was that the constant cry against “Old Scrag” began to poison my mind. He’d been a rare good uncle to me, but, childlike, I knew nothing of that; I only knew that his very name was a dark shadow over me, and I used to picture him as having done some terrible crime in the past, and even imagined that his soul was sold to the devil, as I’d heard the lads say at school was probable. One day, when he bent over me to pat my head, I shrank away i’ a sort of terror; I shall never forget his look at me afterwards. After that I went and asked my mother what he had done that was so horrible and wicked that no one in the town would be his friend or ours. And she looked sad for a long time, and then said: “I reckon it’s because he talks and thinks so different from other folk: *Thou* must love him, little Abel, and make it up for him.” Marjorie, I bought a penny stick o’ toffee that afternoon and gave it him, and he made pretence to eat it; and it were our peace-making like, a peace-making that has never been broken. But

these things set me thinking, lass ; and when I saw anyone outcast or sad I was main sorry for them, sorrier than I should have known how to be had not he and I been lonely and outcast too. And the tale I loved best was the tale o' Christ—the Lord that went about seeking the outcast and the sinner, and bringing them hope and love. Canst thou not see how these things would work i' a child's mind ?

'Abel, I understand every word. Go on, lad.'

'With my growing years they were the same sort o' thoughts, only older ones. And then I began to long for *power* ; I scarcely knew why, but I sought it. And the best power I thought was to be got out o' books. So I learned all I could ; morning, noon, and night my mind was working. Then came my two years in London. I cannot say I was altogether happy there ; open air, and light, and farming-work suited my health and nature better. But the things I heard and saw, and my opportunities of learning, satisfied the

other longing. I went everywhere, and saw everything I could. I saw the palaces, and the parks, and the theatres, and the grand mansions; I managed to beg or press my way into all sorts of places. Once I made friends with a footman in a nobleman's house; there was to be a great ball; I got leave out, and he lent me an old suit of livery, and he got me in. All I had to do was to uncork bottles and little things of the kind, for I knew nothing whatever of the work; but I had learned in the shop to stand still and move about quietly, and the footman said I should never be noticed. But you may be sure I noticed everything I could; I got all sorts of glimpses of what was going on. Dear heart! You never dreamed of such dresses, and such quantities of food and drink and flowers and fruit. At the first I thought it was like heaven; but I've never cared to think of it again. Next day I began to spend my leisure-time and holidays in the alleys and the streets, and the East End where the poor live. I won't tell you about that.




In our village we have never seen anything like it. You see, I watched it all, and yet belonged to neither life; I was just "Old Scrag's boy of Moorfield" in my heart, i' the middle o' all this sight-seeing, this learning about things that were no part o' my own experience. But how they worked i' my mind I canna tell thee. I wondered if men, especially the clergy, were spending their lives i' setting things right. But in the churches I heard all sorts o' things talked that never seemed to touch the point—exhortations to goodness and respectability, praises for the love o' Christ shown i' redemption, talks of a loving Father of us all, and so on; chiefly a misty kind o' dogma (given out though wit rare emphasis, as if the preacher could by any manner o' means understand what he was saying, or the people either, for that matter), which wandered from the point more widely than anything else. I had thought I should find everyone occupied with the problem o' misery. But nought o' t'



sort. It was all such talk as I've mentioned. Thou knows, Marjorie, when Mr. Broadbent, Rector of Hollyss, talks this set religious—cant I were going to say, but I winna—it sounds more reasonable. For in Hollyss you are all, as it were, in one family; and he sees nothing of what is common enough in London. But then, when you look into it, it is only his *ignorance* that makes him talk so; in London, however, where the clergy *must* know more, it seems to me a wicked madness.'

'Abe,' said Marjorie wistfully, 'I am not quite understanding now. I can't bear to miss your meaning. What is the point they are all wide of?'

'Ah, my lass! Thank heaven you do not understand. It'll be hard to explain to such as you. The people at the East End, in the alleys, in the dreadful courts—and I fear in many other parts of England—*can't* be good and respectable; their conditions are such that by no manner of means can they even get at a conception of goodness and purity.



---

They are *not* redeemed by Christ ; there is no universal loving Father.'

' Oh, Abe !'


' Dear lassie, if there were we should all be brothers, and they would not be wretched. To preach to these people about goodness and purity, to exhort them to strive after it, is like it would be to thrust a human being down a drain and keep him there, and then preach sanitary laws to him and exhort him to avoid fever.'

' Can't anything be done for them ? Oh, I am so sorry !'

' That is the point, my Marjorie. Instead of shutting themselves up in their wealth and respectability, and preaching to each other about the loving Father, and offering up thanks for His benefits, let them come forward and behave as His sons.'

The man's eyes were full of fire, and his voice had risen. Marjorie clasped her hands, and sat looking at him, envious of the silence which he was filling with thoughts she could not follow.

‘This thought,’ he went on, speaking with more gentleness again, ‘sprang into my heart like a great prophecy. I renounced the God of the rich from that moment. I would none of Him. I was certain He did not exist; for evidently He was not real to those who made most talk of Him. After that a great darkness fell on my mind; I had no other light than that which comes of pity. Presently I fell in with some German Socialists; my master was what they call a Freethinker, and he sold in his shop the kind of books they like to buy. I need not go into all that now. They had thoughts and ideas which fired my sympathy, and much more learning than I. They too had renounced the religion of the churches as something useless and beside the point. What they aimed at was so to shake and change the world that the conditions which pinned millions of poor wretches to their misery might be altered, and so that they might be set free. I listened to all; I liked much I heard. My heart is warm enough towards



them, and I believe with the whole strength of my belief that the day will come when the present state of things will be changed somehow as they desire. But I could not go altogether with them; there was always something in their schemes to which I could not put my hand; perhaps it was the healthy open-air life, the solid village discipline that went before, which made me more cautious and practical and less sanguine than these men. I could not join them.'

'Go on, Abel.'

He had stopped to raise her face gently, and to look at it.

'Thou art not tired?'

'Oh, you have only just begun.'

'And now comes the part where I must be careful not to deceive thee. My heart was sore with the thought of the loving Father who did not exist. But how could I take comfort to myself when these my brothers were in prison and in misery?'

'Ah, dear Abe!'

'And then all at once the figure of Christ

rose i' my mind. Not that vague figure associated with Christian doctrine and preached so much i' the churches, and not that figure o' grand hard purity that they mention occasionally i' the freethinking chapels and lectures o' London. But Christ walking about the dreary places o' the earth and doing service to His fellows, and bringing light and comfort and help to the poorest, and never wearying or thinking anything too small; kind mostly to the little children and the women and the sick; tender in action, yet inexorable in insisting upon the standard of love and duty to our fellows which we were to follow; saying to the rich young man whom He loved, "Sell all, and give to the poor."'

' Yes, Abel !'

' And the figure dwelt in my mind, and grew there ever clearer, more beautiful, more powerful to draw me from reckless evil, and to remind me of my fellows. And I acknowledged Him as the Brother.'

Marjorie's head had fallen against his



shoulder, but he did not seem to notice it; his eyes were thoughtfully fixed beyond.

‘But whether He will ever show us the Father, I canna say. Not until we keep His law and accept Him for Brother maybe, and go and do like Him. But while I live, struggling on i’ my own little path, without daring to hope that i’ my day much will be done, or that I myself can do much to help, save i’ the strength of my belief—I shall believe, I do believe, that Christ’s standard o’ love and mercy and sacrifice even unto death for our fellows, is the true one for this world, the one we’re bound—nations, statesmen, and individuals—to live up to, to found life upon, to *make* real with every effort of our manhood.’

He paused. Marjorie did not move.

‘I am listening, Abel.’

‘I think that’s almost all, lass. I shall do the little that one man can in opposing the things that look to me like a great wrong, in the small circle that is to make my life. I shall spread the opinions I have faith in, and

never conceal them. All this earns for me a character well-nigh as black as my uncle's. Enough for me if in my little day I can help in lifting but by one inch the weight that crushes the heart of my fellows! What care I whether folk think evil of me or not? Yet I *do* feel it; I have sorely felt it; and then I accept it as being the very circumstance that keeps me awake to my aim and my hope. It is well to have courage to bear pain in this world, and even sin, and have patience to watch the slow unwinding of fate to the end.'

In the energy with which he spoke, he involuntarily freed his arms, pushing Marjorie a little aside. And then he felt her respond to his words and movement by clinging closer to him; the sweetness of it touched other chords, a rapturous smile broke over his face, the enthusiast died in the lover, and he bent over her, murmuring words of endearment. She lifted her face to him, white with the passionate self-surrender of a proud but tender nature, and they kissed each other.

---

‘Abe,’ she whispered, ‘did I say I would not be thy wife?’

‘Thou didst say so, Marjorie.’

‘Wilt forgive me?’

‘Forgive thee? Wilt thou, perhaps, change?’

‘Dost want a poor foolish heart, a mere woman, just for thy own to love and honour thee, and follow thee to death, and learn to be something better because of thee? And wilt——’

She broke off, clinging to him and crying.

‘My lass! That thou may never have occasion to regret it!’

‘I shall not regret it,’ replied Marjorie, raising herself; ‘I will be your wife. Come what will, I will be true to you, and reach you somehow in the end.’

‘Oh, bless thee for that, my own lass! But for the present, Marjorie? Thou knows I had not meant to have spoken until I had won a farm o’ my own, and could have forced thy father i’ some measure to respect me. But thy father must know about *this*. Nothing



shall be laid on thy young conscience that is heavy to bear.'

'Aye. I had thought that I must tell.'

'Yes—or I will go to him.'

'No. It is best that I should say it to him myself.'

'But, my lassie, I will not have thee bound; tell him that.'

'I *am* bound, Abel,' said the girl quickly.

'And I to thee,' he replied gravely. 'All I mean is, in the way of the world. There is no one else who needs to know of our promise to each other. Thou shalt not share the shadow that hangs over me. It will not be long. When I have a farm o' my own, I'll come open and fair to thy father, and he cannot refuse if thou join thy entreaties to mine. But till then thou art not bound, and we need not publish it to the village.'

'But I shall see thee, Abel?'

'There's always the old quarry at hand. On Wednesday evenings I will be here, and I shall wait till thou finds a chance of coming, my own lass.'

‘I should die if I couldn’t see thee.’

‘Lass, thou must hope and be cheery. I think I should die too. But see how strange this meeting and this great joy is! It came like of itself to us. Is na it a good omen?’

‘I don’t know, Abe. Dost see the sun is high over the hills? How long have we been here, think yo?’

‘It’s nigh on noon. Lord! What’ll Christie say?’

‘And thou fannished, my poor lad! But what’ll Christie say? A whole morning’s work lost!’

‘He knows my worth too well, I reckon, to be over-mad at my playing truant for once.’

‘Abe, didst say thou lay here *all* the night?’

‘Aye. But to think o’ the morning o’ joy!’

‘Dost know that I once lay here crying and thinking o’ thee?’

‘Nay! If I had, I should niver have needed to do the like. But when didst *thou* cry for *me*?’

‘It was the day thou come into the kitchen and took the butter.’

‘And I couldn’t make out whether thou wert na sore offended because I’d touched thy bonnie arm!’

‘John was so strange to me, Abel. I cannot make him out. He’s always so hard on the Squire. But I think he favours thee.’


They were walking slowly out of the quarry now, and paused for last words and a last embrace at the entrance.

‘I don’t understand John either. But shall I not be jealous of Devonporte?’

‘No, no!’ cried Marjorie fervently; ‘he’s good and gentle, and never means anything but well. And we’re cousins in a kind o’ way, thou mayst have heard, and we’ve sworn to be friends to the end. Abe, I’m sure there’s only good i’ th’ Squire.’

‘We had a slight struggle once. I’ll tell thee another time when we meet, about it.’

‘Aye. We *must* part now. Whatever it was, thou can explain, I dare say; though John made it look strange o’ both sides.’



He smiled, and bent his head to take a last kiss ; and then he leapt the low wall and ran down the valley towards Christie's farm. As to Marjorie, she made all the speed possible to Milltown with her basket of knitting to make up for lost time.



## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE SHADOW OF OLD SCRAG.

‘I find there are many pieces in this one fabrick or man.’—SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

‘**W**HATIVER’S got that lass?’

Mrs. Morrison had made the above inquiry about a dozen times in the course of the morning. When dinner was over and the afternoon began and continued, and still Marjorie did not appear, she made it even more frequently. She did not ask it with any semblance of anxiety, nor point it to anyone in particular, but cast it forth generally as a helpless protest against her daughter’s unusual delay. At last she varied it.

‘Whativer’s got thee, lass?’ said she, when

Marjorie appeared an hour before tea-time, flushed and happy, with eyes of exceeding brightness and her cheeks in a glow.

‘It’s all right, mother. I’ve sold everything,’ said she, tossing aside her empty basket.

Then she unpinned her shawl and handkerchief, and revealed her bright hair crumpled with its long confinement.

‘Thou’ll be clemmed, child.’

‘I am hungry,’ replied Marjorie, stretching her stately figure and leaning against the door-post, her head thrown back with an air of fatigue.

‘Well, we’ll hurry tea a bit, and then.’

Marjorie stood watching her mother as she moved about the kitchen making the necessary preparations. Everything was just as usual; Sally came in and began to cut the bread into thick slices, and Mrs. Morrison’s portly back bent over the fire in the attitude of toast-making which she had assumed for twenty years or so. There was no difference save in Marjorie’s heart, which bounded with

a joy that the kitchen was too small to hold.

‘I’ll go and call the cows home, mother,’ said she presently.

‘Nay, lass; th’ mon ’ull do that. Thy father doesn’t want thee to do rough work now.’

‘Aye, but I will. I want to be doing something. And the kitchen’s too hot.’

‘Please thyself, child.’

Marjorie tucked her dress through her apron-string, and went out with uncovered head. Her skirt was short, and with her thick shoes and straight ankles she trod lightly and firmly over the muddy yard, and on to the gate in the meadow. There she stood holding it open and calling to the cattle ‘Coo-up, coo-up,’ till the cows turned their slow heads, and stretched out their throats, and made their soft complaining moo, and came grumbling, trotting, or leisurely walking, towards her, some stopping on the way to look about them with their melancholy eyes as though in appreciation of the view.

‘Pretty things,’ said Marjorie as they came and passed her, one or two looking up to moo in her face. ‘My hands are too smooth for a farmer’s lass. I shall milk you to-night.’

Then she drove them before her, and caught up a milking-stool on the way; and when they were all safely in the shed, gathered up her skirts again, and seated herself by one of them with the stool tightly nipped in her knees, and began her milking.

She looked like a high-born lady playing at shepherdess, except for her vigour and skill. A shadow presently darkened the loorway.

‘Lass!’ cried her father’s voice, ‘leave that to John or the mon. There’s no call for thee to do rough work.’

Marjorie turned her head over her shoulder and looked at him, her white teeth glittering between her lips in a merry smile, and her wonderful dark eyes luminous with happiness. The subtle difference between the face of to-day and the face of yesterday,



struck a vague alarm into the heart of the farmer.

‘Dad, the butter’s niver been quite to my mind since I left off the milking ; I’m going to begin it again ;’ and she flashed one of her most wilful winning looks at him.

‘Please thyself, lass,’ said he, melting immediately ; but he went into the house with bent head and a troubled air.

All that evening his eyes followed his daughter. There was nothing excited or unnatural about her, no proud effort at a pretence of mirth ; her happiness was a deep delicious joy that shone in her face and pervaded her whether she would or not, and lasted until she ostensibly retired to rest.

John was out. Most likely, as the farmer had reasons for knowing, he was spending the evening at the Dog and Rosebush ; with the disreputable characters of the village, including, of course, ‘Old Scrag.’ Farmer Morrison sat in his wooden armchair, puffing slowly at his pipe, and ruminating deeply. He had a troubled frown upon his brow, and his hand

shook slightly when, with his little finger, he thrust the tobacco in the bowl. It was tolerably quiet. Mrs. Morrison stood at the dresser with some of her favourite coppers spread before her: these she was rubbing with a leather, although the untaught eye could have discerned no spot upon their brightness. The old clock ticked, and the hands went very slowly round, drawing with them the last signs of a vanishing sun, which would reappear duly on the other side with the morning; the cat purred contentedly; the kettle sang, and Mrs. Morrison scrubbed. Farmer Morrison looked up presently at the fitches of bacon and bunches of herbs, and the oat-cake hanging from the bread-flake; and then round at the handsome oak furniture, at the curious old prints, the rows of shining pans and covers and plates; and last, his eye settled with an air of disfavour upon his wife's form.

‘Coom, mother. Let that foolish fiddle-faddling woman's work a-be.’

Mrs. Morrison, her mind intent on scrubbing, turned round with the leather suspended

upon her hand, surprise struggling in her face with housewifely care.

‘Let them pans a-be,’ said Morrison testily, ‘and come and sit down.’

‘Art mad, Martin Morrison, to ask me to leave my pans before they’re finished?’

‘Thou’ll drive me mad wi’ thy scrubbing. Th’ pans are well enough. What’s up wi’ the lass?’

Mrs. Morrison came forward at once, and sat down upon the other armchair, and leaning her elbow upon it, held the leather still suspended, like a mute’s cloth upon his staff.

‘What’s up wi’ her? Why, I thought she was as peart as a linnet!’

‘And what’s got a lass as is peart as a linnet, the very day her lover leaves her? Is that as it should be?’

Mrs. Morrison’s mind travelled back over its experience, and recollected that when a certain handsome Martin Morrison (who, somehow, was not in the least connected in her ideas with the husband sitting upon the chair before her) had left her for a single week,

she had bade him adieu with kisses and tears, and had cried all day afterwards.

‘ Maybe it’s her spirit ? ’ said she darkly.

‘ Spirits,’ replied Morrison briefly, ‘ is na even. They’re up and down, and here and theer.’

‘ Well ! I’d as lief she were happy. He’ll be coming back soon, and what’s the use o’ her washing her eyes out wi’ crying ? ’

‘ Mother ! ’ said Morrison deliberately. ‘ She cares no more for th’ Squire than she does for yon owd mangy dog i’ th’ kennel.’

‘ Shame on thee, feyther ! To go comparing the Squire with our owd dog ! ’

‘ Now, mother ! Dunna be contrairy. I’ve said nought o’ th’ sort. I tell thee she does na love him.’

‘ I could have taken my oath upon the Bible,’ said Mrs. Morrison, after a long pause, ‘ and the Lord forgive me for saying it, that she were in love.’

‘ Is it with *him* ? ’ cried the farmer testily.  
‘ And if not, who ? ’

Mrs. Morrison began to rock herself upon

her chair, folding the leather unconsciously to her bosom.

‘It *must* be him. Who’s she seen but th’ Squire?’

‘I tell you it’s not him,’ reiterated the farmer stubbornly.

‘Thou’rt saying it to spite me,’ said Mrs. Morrison, with tears. ‘Martin, thou’s made a rare mistake i’ one thing.’

‘And what’s that?’

‘Thou should have let her go to the Hall. Thou should have let her see the fine servants, and the rooms, and the covers off i’ the drawing-room, and the chandelier lit i’ the ball-room. Oh, thou should, Martin! And there’s that wonnerful statty upon th’ stair-top, as fair took my breath away when I see it—thou should have took her to see *that*, and it ’ud all have been right.’

‘Statties!’ cried the farmer contemptuously; ‘if she can’t fall in love with good flesh and blood, dost suppose she will wi’ a bit o’ a stone? She’s a limb o’ qwd Marjorie Devonporte’s, I tell thee, and has a will o’ her own.’

And then the farmer thrust his pipe back in his mouth, though the light had gone out during the conversation, and puffed fiercely and unconsciously at it.

Mrs. Morrison, the beloved pans forgotten, sat with a scared face, her thoughts vaguely wandering amongst cherished fancies and hopes, seeking for some substantial fact to grasp as comfort. In the midst of the silence the door opened, and the fair daughter herself appeared.

Marjorie stepped rapidly forward, and stood upon the hearth between them. The farmer gave one glance upwards, and no more; it was his daughter that he saw before him, but he recognised in a moment the difference between the pliant undeveloped girl and the stately woman in her full-grown love. He thought he knew as well as if she had spoken what was coming.

‘Father, mother,’ she said steadily, ‘there’s something I must tell you both before I go to sleep. I could not rest a single night without I told it to you. This morning, when I was

going to Milltown, I met Abel Greenhough.'


The farmer's hand gave a jerk, and his pipe fell to the ground and was shattered. Mrs. Morrison threw the leather over her face.

'Abel loves me, father, and wants me to be his wife. And I love him.'

The farmer lifted his now unoccupied hand, clenched it, and brought it down upon the arm of his chair with a blow. Then there was complete silence. Even Mrs. Morrison dared not sob aloud; her husband's face was grey, and steadily turned away to the fire. Marjorie heard the beating of her own heart. She moistened her dry lips and went on:

'He has loved me a long time. Father, I have loved him a long time too.'

There is always great difficulty in the young and the old understanding one another. To Marjorie, her own deep love, her belief in Abel, the truth and faith which were to be to her as a religion, were the apparent things; she could hardly believe that they would not meet with some sympathy from those dear to



her. She expected opposition ; she thought she would have to explain, to entreat, to show them how worthy Abel was, to be patient even through a long delay. But she had no adequate idea of the strength of the hopes and the force of the prejudices which had rooted themselves slowly in the old hearts of her parents, and which her young passion was over-riding.


On their parts, it was utterly impossible for them to conceive the feelings with which Marjorie regarded Abel. To hear her say that she loved him—the daughter who had been too good to throw at the head of the Squire—was as great a blow, as great a shame as if she had confessed a passion for a thief or a scavenger. It went directly against everything in which they had educated her—every cherished idea of family importance and worth (as strong in them as though they had been amongst the noble of the land), even of her maidenly dignity and purity ; it could only appear as a strange and horrible perversion of nature.



Farmer Morrison believed that he had discovered indications of a love for Zachary Pearse. It was a bitter disappointment to his hopes; but he had no real objection to Zachary, and the lad bid fair to do well in the world; he was making up his mind, for his child's sake, to set aside his own ambition, and to let her wed the man of her choice. She should have her way now, as ever. But when she came before him and announced the truth, the shock, the degradation, killed in one moment the tenderness of years, and destroyed the associations of a lifetime. It was to the old man no case for negotiation, for stormy anger, for prevention even. The utmost to be allowed was room for repentance.

Marjorie waited anxiously, having no idea of the utter withering of joy in the hearts of her parents, nor of the stern force gathering in her father's mind.

Farmer Morrison stooped down presently and collected the pieces of his pipe, and carefully placed them on the shelf by his side. The leather had fallen from Mrs. Morrison's



face, and with her hand grasping the arm of her chair, she leaned forward staring before her. When the farmer had arranged the pieces of pipe to his satisfaction, he turned his head slightly, and looking in Marjorie's direction, but not at her, said :

‘Thou’rt an undutiful unmaidenly hussy!’

The girl staggered and turned white. These were the first words she had ever heard her father's lips address to her that had not been caressing and tender. And the voice with which they were spoken was worse than the words.

‘Father, why dost speak to me like that?’

‘Thou dost na like it, maybe?’

‘Oh, father, father!’ cried the girl wildly, for every semblance or hint of affection was eliminated from the cold hard voice.

‘Until thou returns to thy duty and gives up that rascally fire-eating Greenhough, thou’ll hear no other language than that.’

Silence again. Marjorie's knees were bending under her, but with an effort of will she rallied and stood upright.

‘Hast aught fresh to say?’ continued he.

‘Nothing fresh, father,’ she replied, in a low startled voice. ‘There is nothing to add or to take away from what I said at first.’

Farmer Morrison got up and deliberately took down a fresh pipe, and then drew his tobacco can near and began calmly to fill the bowl; he lit it, and while he was puffing the flame, asked in the same hard tone, without so much as looking her way:

‘When art going to be wed?’

*Her* wedding! And her father spoke of it with as much indifference as if she had been a beggar at his door!

‘I do not know. Oh, father! when thou gives me leave,’ said Marjorie helplessly. ‘Abel told me that I was not bound to him, because he had not spoke to thee. Father, Abel is good. He did not mean to ask me yet; he isn’t going to be wed yet. It was a kind of accident!’

‘Ah. Maybe thou asked him.’

The blood left the girl’s heart and rushed

in a wild flood to her head; then it went back as quickly, leaving her deadly pale, with a throb in her throat. It was an insult for a man to fling at a woman; and her father had spoken it. She turned to leave the kitchen.

‘Stop!’

Marjorie stopped, and turned her agonized face again towards him. He was not looking up, nor did he appear to be in the least agitated.

‘Since thou art na bound to yon fellow, thou’ll maybe see where thy duty lies i’ time. If so, thou can come and tell me or thy mother.’

‘I am bound to him in my heart for ever,’ said Marjorie solemnly.

‘Ah! When thou’s wed him, thou understands that thou’ll never set foot i’ my house again. Thou can go to Old Scrag.’

She made a step towards the door.

‘But,’ continued her father, ‘until thou’rt wed thou can stay here on one condition. And I expect, since thou’ll be eating my

bread and living at my expense, that thou'll comply with it.'

'I will promise you anything, father, that does not come between Abel and me,' said Marjorie, clinging in this general collapse to the faith that was left her.

'Then thou'll promise me that while thou'rt living beneath my roof thou'll remember thy duty to thy family sufficiently to keep thy disgrace a secret. Thou'll not say a word of it to John, or to any single person in the world; least o' all to th' Squire.'

Marjorie remembered that this was the wish which Abel himself had expressed; she could not see the least reason for not complying; why should any eyes but those immediately concerned be witnesses of her misery? She replied without hesitation:

'I do promise you, father.'

'Thou may go.'

As the girl turned away, Mrs. Morrison sprang from her chair with intent to follow.

'Woman! sit down!' shouted the farmer.

And Marjorie, with tender thought for her

mother, made the greater haste in her exit, and fled upstairs to her own room, there to sit upon her bed with her pulses beating in pain, and then to lie down to toss all night in misery, and ever and anon to grasp at comfort in the thought that though all the world forsook her, she still had her Abel.

Meanwhile her parents sat on in the kitchen. Mrs. Morrison had fallen back in her chair stiffly at her husband's command, and when the door was closed the two stole a slow unwilling glance towards each other. Then the farmer lifted his hands above his head, and let them drop back upon his knee in the eloquent action of despair, and bowed his head upon his breast.

'Oh, father! have some mercy!' sobbed Mrs. Morrison.

'If iver thou shows by word or token that thou's got a mother's heart i' thy breast for yon lass, I'll make thee repent it!' said the man, lifting his head and looking ominously at his wife.

'Oh! oh!' moaned the poor woman.

‘Cease thy caterwauling. It’s always a woman’s way to add to misery by aggravation!’

‘Oh, Martin! My heart’s broke!’


‘So’s mine,’ said the old man shortly.

‘To think o’ the Hall, and the satting curtains in the drawing-room, and the Squire with his beautiful straight legs! Oh, mon! thou should have argued with her,’ cried Mrs. Morrison, voluble in grief.

‘Argued!’ repeated old Morrison contemptuously.

The one tender love of a stern nature had been violated, and grief awakened the latent brutality, and sought for solace in savage resolve. His feeling was too intense to allow him to grasp at any one image of departed joy, as his wife could. She knew upon what her heart had dwelt; her hopes were catalogued like furniture—his were the wholeness of his nature.

Nevertheless Mrs. Morrison’s motherly love was something apart from the general tone of her mind, and haunted and troubled it like a



rich guest in a poor dwelling. It was this knowledge that caused a momentary softening of her husband's heart when his eyes fell upon his wife's white, helpless, grief-stricken face. He could love no longer, but he experienced some slight feeling of tenderness towards the creature who could, even while he forbade her to do it.

'Wife,' he said, with a sharp sigh at the effort which speech caused him, 'we can't undo the disgrace that's fallen. But we may save the end on't. Arguing's no use wi' such as Marjorie.'

His former love had taught him to read the possibilities in her character.

'There's only one plan. Wilt obey me and take up wi' it?' continued he.

'Oh, thou knows very well as I've iver been an obedient doable wife! Thou'll be saying next as all this contrariness were bred i' my bones!'

'Well, well! Thou'll obey belike. If thou does na, thou'll regret it. And I tell thee there's one chance. A chance o' the




Hall and the furniture, thou understands,' said the farmer, with some diplomatic skill.

'Mam! thou knows I always lets thee think—except when it's the measles, and thou ~~would~~ want me t' gie the little lass a bit o' th' pork-pie off thy plate.'

'Well, well!' said the father, wincing at the memory, 'here's th' chance then: Let her choose betwixt us and that scoundrel. Let her know day by day—*day by day*—what she's thrown away for that rubbitch; let her *feel* what the wrong choice 'ull be—*feel it* before she's gone the last length i' taking it.'

'Ay, mon! But thou's forgot t' make her promise not t' see him.'

'And where 'd be the use o' making her give me a promise as I know she would na keep? I wanted that other promise, and I reckon on her keeping that. To give her her own way, and to let her taste what that way 'ull be, is our only chance wi' Marjorie. She'll tire of it hersel in time, maybe. Woman!' he repeated solemnly, 'if ever thou shows by word or token that thou bears her a mother's



love until she's repented, I shall hold thee to blame i' the matter.'

These seemed temperate words ; but Mrs. Morrison knew their meaning perfectly. Very often in a weak nature fear will supply the place of nerve and resolution ; and besides, Mrs. Morrison fully believed in her husband's acuteness, and trusted that through his guidance the days of hope, of visionary joy in which stores of household linen and satin curtains were prominent, would come back ; while her motherly love promised her a speedy return of the happy occasions in which she might brush out Marjorie's hair again, and intersperse her admiration of the wonderful locks with words of forgiveness and renewed love.

Next day the strenuous dealing began. Marjorie, the woman whose smallest gift had always been made much of, had stooped to the man whose brightest qualities were systematically neglected or misconstrued ; and the shadow of his fate rested already upon her. She made efforts to atone for the wound she

had given her parents by tenderer love, by more complete fidelity in daily duties; and then came that slow martyrdom of the spirit and affections, which many a one besides Marjorie has had to endure, but of which she certainly tasted a full and bitter measure—that service of love upon her part, and that cold ignoring of it upon others; that resolute unresponse to every demonstration of affection, which strikes upon the one who has to bear it with the same effect as brutality.

Every day to which she awoke was, at first, a fresh amaze of sorrow to the daughter of love and beauty; she could not believe that her services, her caresses, her pitiful efforts at atonement, would win nothing back for her at all. She waited for the relenting look that never came, for the opportunity of explanation; she looked from one beloved face to the other, but always there was the same icy indifference, the same wall shutting her out from the old familiar love.

The first Wednesday that came she had not the heart to go out to meet Abel; on the

second, starving for the daily bread of affection which had once seemed so secure to her, she escaped from the house and flew to the quarry, to find the eager arms of her lover ready. She did not tell him of the extremity of her grief; she had only come to say that their hope—if there were any—was in the distant future, to receive support and comfort from his presence, and to renew her own promises to him.

But the girl did not go to see him often; it clashed too much with her sense of duty; the very consolation the meeting gave her seemed a wrong. She would live on the thought of him, on the love she had for him, on the hope of a future union with the consent of her parents.

In this way the weeks went slowly by until the time when the Squire had promised his return. Marjorie vaguely wondered what would happen when he came back; whether his re-appearance would bring relief or otherwise.

Meanwhile John, ever on the alert, noticed

her pale distracted looks, and in the beginning set them down to her lovelornness at the Squire's absence ; he took care, therefore, to add his covert brutality to his parents' coldness. By-and-bye, however, he became mystified ; he could not avoid discovering the displeasure of the old people towards his sister, and her unconcealed indifference whenever the Squire's name was mentioned. Logically the inference was against her being in love with the Squire. John was by no means certain ; but the odds were in his favour, and he promptly put himself upon his sister's side, and treated her with an amount of consideration which she had not received from him of late.

One day he was almost sure that he had found out the whole matter.

He came in one evening earlier than usual from the Dog and Rosebush. He was none the worse for drink ; indeed, he was too excited for that. Supper was ready, and John, contrary to custom, sat down to share the meal with the rest.

‘I’ve a bit o’ news for yo,’ said he, chuckling with malicious glee.

‘Well, what is it?’ said the farmer coldly.

‘Th’ Squire’s come home.’

‘I’m glad t’ hear it.’

John looked across to Marjorie; a faint tinge of colour had come into her pale face; she started and looked up; but the interest seemed a dim and second-hand affair.

‘Aye. Thou’ll be more glad presently. Thou knows Abel Greenhough?’

His eyes were upon the beautiful wan face. There was no start, no flush. Only a sudden intensifying of the countenance into a throbbing interest; and she drooped her eyes. John had not much insight, but he thought he had got on to the right tack now.

‘A bad nephew of a low bad man,’ said the farmer coolly. ‘Do I know him? Aye. In the same way that I know his uncle, Old Scrag, or the rat-man and his scurvy dog, or any other rogue. Why dost drag his name before a respectable family?’

There had been the slightest rearing of the

beautiful slender throat opposite; the lips gently parted, and the deep dark eyes lifted themselves slowly, and fixed themselves over John's head at the wall above. How indescribably haughty she looked and grand! somehow her brother felt proud of her. He brought his fist down on to the table with a sounding thud.

'Greenhough's a first-rate fellow—as good a mon as there is betwixt this and Milltown. And the Squire's a damned idiot. He's had Abe up before the magistrates, on a charge o' trespassing and damaging his property. And Abe won't pay the fine, and they've clapped him i' prison.'

'Right place for him,' said the farmer.

But the girl's self-control was over. She rose and pushed her chair back, and darted her stormy eyes at the faces on either side of her; and then, without a word, left the room. John heard her running upstairs. Was she angry because he had called the Squire names? or because they had put Abe in prison? He believed the latter. He *would* know. He

followed her from the room, and sprang up the stairs after her, and caught hold of her skirt to detain her just as she reached the top.

‘Look here, my poor bonnie lass!’ he cried in breathless excitement; ‘don’t take on! I’ll go and see Abe to-morrow.’

Marjorie turned, her eyes luminous with gratitude at the unwonted kindness of the words and tone. She bent towards her brother, who, standing several steps below her, lifted his face to hers.

‘Oh, John! Bless thee for thy kind words to me!’

‘Shall I take him a message from thee, my pretty Marjorie?’

The girl looked keenly at him; there was a touch of too great eagerness in John’s face—a breathless something that frightened her. She suddenly remembered her promise to her father; longing, as she did, to speak to Abel, to go to him in his misfortune (which *now* she understood only too clearly), she *dared* not send a message by John. Had she



beautiful slender throat opposite; the lips gently parted, and the deep dark eyes lifted themselves slowly, and fixed themselves over John's head at the wall above. How indescribably haughty she looked and grand! somehow her brother felt proud of her. He brought his fist down on to the table with a sounding thud.

'Greenhough's a first-rate fellow—as good a mon as there is betwixt this and Milltown. And the Squire's a damned idiot. He's had Abe up before the magistrates, on a charge o' trespassing and damaging his property. And Abe won't pay the fine, and they've clapped him i' prison.'

'Right place for him,' said the farmer.

But the girl's self-control was over. She rose and pushed her chair back, and darted her stormy eyes at the faces on either side of her; and then, without a word, left the room. John heard her running upstairs. Was she angry because he had called the Squire names? or because they had put Abe in prison? He believed the latter. He *would* know. He

followed her from the room, and sprang up the stairs after her, and caught hold of her skirt to detain her just as she reached the top.

‘Look here, my poor bonnie lass!’ he cried in breathless excitement; ‘don’t take on! I’ll go and see Abe to-morrow.’

Marjorie turned, her eyes luminous with gratitude at the unwonted kindness of the words and tone. She bent towards her brother, who, standing several steps below her, lifted his face to hers.

‘Oh, John! Bless thee for thy kind words to me!’

‘Shall I take him a message from thee, my pretty Marjorie?’

The girl looked keenly at him; there was a touch of too great eagerness in John’s face—a breathless something that frightened her. She suddenly remembered her promise to her father; longing, as she did, to speak to Abel, to go to him in his misfortune (which *now* she understood only too clearly), she *dared* not send a message by John. Had she

he wanted, and had his opinion as to the way in which the desirable reforms might be obtained. Nor was he entirely led captive of his own enthusiasm; he had studied the subject of Socialism deeply and critically, and detected flaws in the reasoning even of that school which he most admired.

Born and bred with revolutionary tendencies, he yet had a large share of the stolid English calm; he did not imagine that a revolution can be artificially made; he merely put himself heart and soul upon the side of the revolution that he believed was coming. The purely anarchist type, the dark and malignant destroyers of society, revolted him; yet he studied their history, and sought rather to understand what evils had brought them forth than to blame them for existing. He had read the books of Lassalle and Karl Marx carefully; and he loved Louis Blanc, though he perceived his mistakes.

His theories were founded upon the opinion that every man born into the world has a right to food, work, happiness, and the full

---

development of his powers along the highest lines possible to him ; and he considered that any institution, or law, or privilege, or class, which imposed artificial restrictions or burdens upon the bulk of men, or placed them in such a position that any one of these things was impossible to them and out of their reach, was a flagrant evil and injustice which it was worth a man's while to combat with all the strength and energy he possessed.

Abel Greenhough was simply an individual manifestation of the fair side of that indeterminate force lying in the noble and generous impulse after reform and equity so conspicuous in modern opinion, and of which the dark side may be said to lie in anarchical theories and dangerous societies. His heart was inspired by a fine aspiration after an ideal justice, and it often afforded him motive and guidance in his personal life.

Fortunate and moderately successful himself in labour and its rewards, he desired that all about him should have an equal chance of material prosperity ; unfortunate beyond

his fellows in suffering from tyrannical and false opinion, he had been led to brood rather over the general effects of tyranny and false opinion upon the suffering race at large, than over his own special case. For himself, his earthly aim was to acquire a competence, position, *culture*: but more prominent than this was his aim to do what little he could towards helping others in the struggle, where he found that they were unfairly or unduly weighted. And when the first aim clashed with the second, the former went to the ground.

The villagers, however much they disapproved of Abel, were quite ready to follow his dangerous steps in matters touching their own comfort, when they saw that the brunt of the blame would fall upon his shoulders should the thing be inquired into. So Abel had led the way in several affairs, and earned for himself a corresponding character. At last he had landed himself in prison. It had all the honourableness of a small martyrdom; but people did not see that.

Abel's idea of what were artificial restrictions and burdens differed fundamentally from those of the gentry around. We need not go into them all; but we may remind the reader of the point upon which he differed from the Squire of Hollyss.

He had discovered that a wild bit of moor and a wild bit of copse that were doing no good to the country or the people might be made practical use of. Could a right of way be established across them between Hollyss and Moorfield and Milltown, there would be a daily saving of an hour and a half's labour and time to the working-classes around. Everyone who has done hard work knows what a daily hour and a half of time means to the life.

Abel set himself to effect the change. And for two or three years all had gone smoothly. And then the Squire had come home, and, as we know, complained that the game preserves were utterly destroyed. This year he had hedged and fenced and forbidden, and furnished the copse with young birds and

eggs. But Abel had taken no notice ; flocks of people, animated by his example, took no notice either, and followed him into the forbidden ground. So that the Squire's hedges and fences, and the birds and the eggs he had bought—all undeniable property—were destroyed. And Abel, the ringleader, was clapped into prison for contempt of court when he utterly refused to acknowledge the misdemeanour and to pay the fine.

So here he sat in his cell, looking like a hawk in a cage. His strong brown hands hung listlessly between his knees, and his eyes kept opening suddenly to glance round the ceiling in his alert fiery way, out of pure habit. This was his second day, and it already seemed a week.

Presently, however, the grating lock flew back, the door opened, the gaoler stuck his head in with a friendly grin, withdrew it, and ushered in Mr. Howell, the minister of Milltown.

Saul would certainly not have heard of Abel's misfortune had he depended upon

gossip. Derrick did not mention what he knew his friend would disapprove of, and Saul did not visit at the houses where the incident was discussed; Milltown was too engrossed with its own coarse and frequent tragedies to care much for such a savourless fact as the clapping into prison of a labourer for trespassing. But the matter was put down amongst the dry details of the police reports; Saul saw it, and made up his mind to pay the visitation.

Abel rose respectfully when he entered. He did not greatly care to be visited by the minister of Milltown; but Marjorie had spoken enthusiastically of his goodness and kindness, and had told him what a friend they might have had in him if only her father had not forbidden her to tell *anyone*.

Saul, who had never chanced to encounter Abel, and who had formed a low idea of him consistent with general report, hesitated and stepped back when he saw what manner of man was standing before him.

‘I think the gaoler must have made a mis-



take,' said he, with respect; 'I asked to see a man called Abel Greenhough.'

'I am Abel Greenhough, sir.'

'Are you?'

And then Saul came forward cordially and held out his hand—not from any gracious condescension, but because the appearance of the prisoner demanded the forms of respectful greeting that are usual between equals.

'I am very sorry for your misfortune, Greenhough.'

'It is not the cheeriest side o' life, certainly,' said Abel, pointing to his bed as the only available seat, and making no apology for the nature of it; 'but I've gained one o' my points, yo see.'

'Indeed?'

'Yes; I've got the subject aired a bit.'

'You are aware,' said Saul quietly, 'that acts like this have very little significance, whereas they bring great trouble upon yourself?'

'If everyone said that, nothing 'ud be done at all. I know it well enough. Yet just the

part which each man can do at present is to yield a bit of his own interest, so as to keep the general interest before the mind of the public. That's how abuses get noticed at last.'

'I do not understand your making an attack upon my friend the Squire of Hollyss. He is a particularly generous and thoughtful man.'

'I've made no attack on him. I wanted the bit o' moor and the copse to ease my fellows and myself.'

'But he might—I cannot help thinking that he *would* have permitted you to have it, had you asked him.'

'I did put it to him. *Ask* him for it I would not; wild land isn't his to give or keep. I want no man's generosity. It is justice that I aim at.'

'Well, Greenhough, to tell you the truth, I do acknowledge the justice of your view of the matter. It is this that has brought me here to see you. But I am sorry that you have got into such trouble over it. And also

that you should make an enemy of a kind and unselfish man like Mr. Devonporte.'

'Unselfish as an individual he may be, perhaps,' said Abel; 'but it does not matter to me whether he is or not. He has his class selfishness; and that is the hardest to deal with of all. When it's a question o' the privilege o' class, folk don't see that it's selfishness; they think it a grand kind o' heroism to defend it.'

'You would abolish all class privileges?'


'Certainly. The basis o' everything should be the common humanity and the common rights.'

'Well, I'm not here to argue against you. I've seen enough misery to make me welcome any scheme of change that may alter it. It is of another matter I wish to speak to you, if I may.'

'Aye, sir. Speak, and welcome.'

'It is on the subject of your reputed atheism. You do not believe in a God?'

There was something strange in the manner with which Saul said this; he looked



up timidly and anxiously into the face of the man who was seated beside him. Abel's face was a strong and peaceful one; the suddenness of his glances up and around gave an impression of activity, but not of restlessness; and when he turned his remarkable eyes upon his visitor they rested there calmly. But Saul's eyes were full of surmise and apprehension; his tone was neither compassionate nor didactic. In so powerful a face as his the contrast of the weakness of uncertainty was tragical.

‘No, sir,’ replied Abel; ‘you are right.’

‘Do you not feel the want of His consolation and support?’ said Saul, turning his head away suddenly, and speaking in rather a dull tone.

‘As I saw things—no.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘The idea of Him crushed me. He was the God o’ the higher classes. I have always before my eyes the wretched and degraded who do not profit by the knowledge of Him.’

‘Atheism and Socialism go together as a rule, I fear,’ said Saul vaguely, with his hands nervously moving over the nap of his hat.

‘Mostly, sir ; not always, by any manner of means.’ Abel paused after he had said this, and then added reflectively : ‘I reckon that the idea of God and of Immortality was bound to be lost to some for a time.’

‘How so ?’ asked Saul hurriedly.

‘It has not been my part to consider much over religion—the orthodox religion, I mean. It has not come home to me in any way. But, looking at it in a critical outside sort of manner, I should say that to lose it was the only way of making ourselves feel the responsibility of this life. If it is true—the losing of it is to cure our half-heartedness.’

‘I do not follow you.’

‘Well, if this world and this body are all, depend upon it it will be impossible to tolerate for long the wretchedness of millions of mankind through the only life we have. Take

away the idea of future compensation and supernatural comfort, and we are compelled to set to work to put the things right that are wrong *here*. Religion has done a good deal to foster that "let alone" spirit which prompts us to leave the bettering of our fellows to the chances of the next world.'

Abel had discarded the dialect, and was talking as he had learnt to talk in London. Saul listened with secret wonder.

'Can we do anything,' he asked with the same vagueness, 'without the inspiring faith in a guiding hand, a loving Father?'

'A man must have faith in *right*, if that's what you mean.'

'No. I meant in God.'

'Well; faith can do wonders when it is of a good sort. I've no doubt when a man has a strong belief that he is backed up supernaturally, that he *might* set to work all the harder. Some, however, would feel their own efforts superfluous. Occasionally it comes to me as an evidence of the existence of a Father and of His justice, that He hides His face

from us for a while, and bids us use the natural means He has placed in our hands—that is, help ourselves.’

‘You are an outspoken man,’ said Saul hurriedly. ‘You would take the foundation of belief away.’

‘It is often but rotten stuff that is built thereon.’

‘You use the scourge somewhat widely,’ said Saul, smiling faintly. ‘And now tell me where you Socialists find a practical remedy.’

‘I think, sir, if you studied the literature of Socialism, you would see that there are schemes for bettering the condition of the wretched which are not impractical as are those of mere dreamers. We do not depend upon the vanity of private philanthropists; we would raise their condition normally.’

‘At least your enthusiasm deserves respect.’

‘I am glad you think so,’ said Abel. ‘Could you but look at it with eyes unprejudiced by your position and calling, you

might come to the conclusion that all we wanted was to apply Christ's spirit to the whole social problem, and not merely have it i' patches o' sentiment here and there. Let Him *reign* on the earth. It was the promise, and it is given to us to fulfil it.'

Saul, usually so vigorous in speech, sat silent. The need of talk, the need of display, of acting up to the opinion the world had formed of him, was in abeyance. In the presence of this man he knew that nothing in particular was expected of him ; he might sit still if he wished, his head drooping on his breast, despondency and trouble written on his brow. Abel, having concluded what he had to say, was beating his finger-tips softly together, and making measurements of the ceiling with his eyes. Saul rose presently.

' I'm glad you've such a mild sentence. A few days and it will be over. I suppose they treat you well ?'

' Oh yes. It's merely "locking up" that was ordered for me ! They're very friendly. It's nothing.'



‘Have you any books?’

‘No.’

Abel looked rather eager.

‘Well, I happen to have one with me. Would you like it?’

‘Is it a tract?’ asked Abel, with humorous hesitation.

‘No, no! A book of science. Popular lectures.’

‘Mr. Howell, yo’re main kind. I reckon my few days ’ull be a pleasure,’ said Abel, pocketing the treasure.

‘Well, good-bye. I can’t help wishing you’d been a little more prudent.’

‘Yo’re kind to care at all,’ said Abel, with a touch of surprise.

‘I so fear you’ll feel the effects of it afterwards.’

‘I shall,’ said the prisoner gravely; ‘more than you or anyone knows.’

He was thinking of Marjorie Morrison; but Saul, whose heart was chronically haunted by the same image, had no idea of it.

‘And to tell the truth, Greenhough, I’m

afraid you've overdone it. You've lost your point. The people don't like the idea of fines and prison, and none of them will cross the moor again.'

Abel looked down, and the ghost of a smile played over his lips.

'The Squire is going to wait about in person, with three or four men, gamekeepers, and others; and I've no doubt they will carry fire-arms just to make a show and frighten the people. No one will ever venture again.'

The smile was dancing now in broad fun over Abel's face.

'Well,' continued Saul with a sigh, 'I'm glad to see you so cheerful. "Stone walls do not a prison make."'

"Nor iron bars a cage,"' responded Abel lightly. 'Good-bye, and thank yo, sir.'

Saul went out, and heard the door grate behind. He looked round; what a wretched awful place a prison was! He went on to the end of the passage, and then turned and looked back. 'I envy,' he said to himself,

‘that man from the bottom of my miserable heart.’

Then he followed the gaoler, who stood waiting for him and chewing tobacco with an indifferent air.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

### HOW ABEL WON HIS VICTORY.

‘The reason of heaven does not strive, yet conquers well.’

**H**AVINIA PEARSE left the Clough Mill the evening of the day on which Mr. Howell had visited Greenhough in the prison with a beating heart. I think it must have been the largeness of her timid blue eyes that made her look on that particular occasion smaller and frailer than usual, while it was certainly the inward terror she experienced that gave the pallor to her face.

She lingered about the yard as long as was possible, furtively crying as she saw her companions—the groups of strong lasses, the

strings of able-bodied lads—trooping out of the great gates with stolid sulky composure, and turning, some under the arch over the road, some to the lane by the brook, and on to the long tiring path to Hollyss. How peaceful and silent the old mill felt when they were gone; the machinery was sleeping, but the smell of oil and cotton, so delightful to her sense, was warm and pleasant in the evening air. John, the lodge-keeper with the bent legs, came out and looked round, and seeing the small figure lingering behind, said nothing, but closed the great gates and set the small lodge-wicket open for her to pass.

There was no excuse for remaining; she went out, as gradually as was possible for a thing that took so little space, and got outside the mill. Then she walked some few hundreds of yards up the lane until she reached a gap in the tumbledown wall; over this she passed, and scrambled up the bank beyond with nervous hurry, scarcely pausing in her haste till she reached the top of the first undulation.

She was now on the side of a steep hill, and the crown was still to be surmounted ; it frowned upon her as she looked up to it from her momentary resting-place. The sight brought back a crowd of associations. For the last two years she had climbed it daily in merry companionship ; and here was the spot in which she so often encountered Abel on his way from Christie's farm. Scarcely ever did she meet him without his stopping to take hold of her with his strong arm, and to turn back to help her over the crown of the hill. And now she was alone ; none of the companions had dared to venture, and Abel, her friend and protector, was in prison.


'Prison' was a word of vague terrors to Lavinia ; it meant something dark and dreadful and shameful ; it was altogether connected with unspeakable wickedness. And yet, when she thought of Abel being there, the place, to her imagination, took an aspect of light.

Lavinia had two pictures before her mind's

eye—the representations of two great events of the last week. In the first she saw before her a small court of justice—or rather, she was conscious that it was a court of justice, for she saw nothing but a man coming out of the box with a policeman by his side. And she remembered that the man's eyes had sought hers, and that his lips had moved, and that, somehow—she wondered how she had dared—she had found herself near him, holding his hand and looking in his face; and that while the policeman turned away he had whispered: 'Go to Marjorie Morrison, and tell her that I count her to be free. But oh, Lavvy! manage to bring me the answer!'

Then Lavinia, sitting on the hillside, thought of what the answer had been—delivered to her, of course, in the strictest secrecy: 'Tell him I love him a thousand times more, and I'm with him in everything he does.'

In the second picture she was in the prison. There was a dark place, and a grating; a warder was there, and she had



a sense of suffocation and terror. But she saw nothing save the face looking at her through the grating. He was saying in as low a voice as possible: 'For my sake, Lavvy lass, have the courage to do't. It's just because thou'rt so tiny and weak that thou hast th' best strength. There'll nought happen thee, lass, but a bit o' a fright at most. They canna eat thee. And if thou'rt fined I'll pay *thine* for thee, though I wouldna pay my own. Wilt go thy lone, lass?' And she remembered that she had had the heart to promise.

Lavinia's nature had no sympathy whatever with rebellion. She regarded the submissive respect of her own class to the higher ones as part of her duty to God and her neighbour. Towards the house of Devonporte, in particular, she had a faithful affection, and it would never have occurred to her to question the justice of the Squire's actions. Laws and restrictions were a matter of course about which she did not dream of repining, nor did she greatly concern her-




self with them. Patience, contentedness, gentleness, and submission were her strong characteristics; moreover, a shrewd common-sense which made her distrust, while she admired, the conclusions at which her brother and Abel would come. But Abel was the best friend that ever she had had, the being who had made the world at times beautiful for her, and given her a taste of the higher joys.

She had, in the midst of her timid gentleness, a force, not of passionate devotedness like Marjorie's, but of quiet fidelity that could accomplish much. Abel had called out the whole of this. She indulged in no broken-hearted sentiment, no obscurity of passion for him; but she would simply have gone anywhere, have done anything, and borne anything at his bidding, without hope or thought of receiving anything in return.

And Abel had asked her to cross the Grouse Moor and the Low Wood 'her lone,' for his sake, while he was in prison.

Of course she would do it. That was all



said. But how her heart beat in her poor little side, and how she panted and struggled as she mounted the crown of the hill in her terror! She reached the top at last; the physical difficulty was over. There was nothing now but a walk over the bonny brown moor, and the dip into the copse, and the run across the field, and out into the road, and so home. But then the spiritual terrors! The sense of outraged law, of angry justice, of a vengeance that could seize even upon Abel! Were not all these things hovering about her?


Lavvy looked round cautiously, peering with her white face and her mild blue eyes over the brown undulations as far as she could see. No; nothing. If the policeman was waiting anywhere—and the villagers said he would—he was not within sight. There was a post, however, bearing a board right before her; it had been put across the familiar path that her own feet had helped to make, treading after the footprints of Abel. But there was not room for a man to hide

behind, and a post was but a post at the most. Lavvy advanced and reached it.

*‘Trespassers will be prosecuted.’*

Ah! Did Abel know? ‘Prosecuted’ meant prison, no doubt; it might mean the treadmill. Perhaps Abel had not known; for it had certainly been erected since he had been here. There was nothing for it but to proceed, of course. She wished that her throbbing heart did not make the walking so painful. How wild and lonely the moor was; how silent! She had scarcely noticed it before; but now she felt that nothing in the great bare place could afford her a protection, and almost envied the rabbits the burrows into which they could dart for refuge.

People had been known to meet fetches and ghosts on the moor; and was it not probable that she was a ‘seer’? The idea threw her into a painful state of nervous terror; she sank upon her knees in the heather, and covered her eyes, almost expecting that some inhuman shriek would strike upon her ear, or



some bony hand clutch her shoulder. Then, sick and white, she stumbled to her feet and tried to run on. Impossible. Her knees bent under her. What could she do? Go on, of course : but how was she to master her failing courage?

Then Lavinia suddenly remembered that she could sing, that she had a strong clear voice trained by constant exercise in the choir. Was she so greatly rebelling against the laws of God that a hymn would be impious? She thought not. What Abel bade her do could not be wicked. If she were wrong, her voice would probably have failed her with the rest. She tried it. No ; the sound sailed away like a soft flute-like echo, and, as the girl made it, she lifted her eyes unconsciously from the sad brown masses of heather to the clearness of sky and of air. And suddenly her heart took courage ; she stood up and walked on singing with all her strength :

‘The King of Love my Shepherd is,  
Whose goodness faileth never ;  
I nothing lack if I am His,  
And He is mine for ever.’

And so across the lank brown moor, and down to the shadowy copse.

Meanwhile Derrick, with his gamekeepers and a groom or two, was waiting at the entrance of the Low Wood. He was dressed in shooting costume with gaiters, and had his powder-pouch by his side ; he leaned gloomily upon his gun, and Bel was with him. He hated the whole affair ; it was unutterably disgusting to him ; Horrocks, the new gamekeeper, had better have left the matter alone. Had it not been for the contumacy of Greenhough he would not have pursued it ; but Greenhough must be crushed, and the rebellion in the village put down.

‘ Horrocks ! isn’t it too late for any of them to come ? ’

‘ It’s a bit late ; but they’ll be coming, I make no doubt. I thought I heard a something then. ’

They listened. The breeze, which was very light, carried the girl’s voice towards them ; it came faintly at first, but soon increased to a loud clear tone ;

‘In death’s dark vale I fear no ill  
With Thee, dear Lord, beside me ;  
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,  
Thy Cross before to guide me.’

Derrick turned sharply away from the scrutiny of his men, and the colour rushed to his face. The second gamekeeper laughed.

‘What i’ th’ name o’ fortun’s coming?’ said Horrocks.

They all, except the Squire, were looking towards the point of the moor from which the voice proceeded. In another moment the fluttering garments of a girl appeared, a pale face looked timidly down from the bank above them, the voice ceased, and Lavinia descended slowly in the courage of despair.

‘Art thou *all*, my lass?’ shouted Horrocks.

‘Aye, I’m all,’ responded Lavinia, coming to stand before them in the idea that it was best to give herself up without struggle.

Horrocks looked down upon Abel’s guilty partner with a broad and undisguised grin.

‘Well! Whativer!’ said he at last.

‘Horrocks,’ said Derrick, coming forward with his face working, ‘you can go, and so

can the others. I will speak to this girl myself.'


And then the assembled horrors—the men, the guns, the 'sticks and staves'—vanished from Lavinia's eyes like a horrible vision; and she was left alone with the Squire.

'How is it that, in spite of prohibition, you have ventured to take the path over the moor and on to Low Wood?'

'Well, sir,' said Lavinia, looking at him with her wide-open anxious eyes, 'I'm sorry if I've done wrong. But yo see, I'm so small and weak. I can scarce walk to th' Clough Mill and back, and my living to get at piecing, and a deal o' housework o' one sort and another, when I'm to home, as it is, and it's a fairish way round by the path.'

Derrick took a glance at her. It had been difficult to lift his eyes before. She was so frail and thin that the flutter of her agitated heart was plainly discernible; so was the terror in her eyes and the tremor of her mouth.

'What is your name?'



‘Lavinia Pearse, sir.’

‘Are you—yes ; you are Zachary’s sister!’

Derrick suddenly remembered the rent handed to him from the slim hand, in the little blue packet, and the anxious eyes that had looked at him then.

‘But Zach’s not to be blamed for my fault,’ said the small thing steadily.

‘No,’ said Derrick wearily. ‘Lavinia!’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘You can tell the people to-morrow, that they may come over the moor if they like. I give them the right of way for ever ; and the game may go to the devil!’

‘Ay, sir!’ cried the girl, dropping a curtsey, and amazed both at his generosity and his language. ‘Yo’re wunnerful kind! Ay! there’s a many as ’ull be thankful. Nancy Nadin is fair lamet wi’ rheumatic, and some with their legs bent from over-work when childer, and all on us tired. Ay! sir! but yo’re main kind.’


‘Am I? Well, good-night ; and get home now.’



Derrick turned away, and Lavinia flew through the Low Wood in the strength of joy. But the Squire paused with gloomy face and unloaded his gun.

‘Greenhough has beaten me,’ he said, with a frown, ‘but he has made me doubly an enemy.’

Now, it is easy to see how swiftly this good news would travel through the village, and how surely it would reach the ears of John Morrison. I pass over the description of how the village worthies met to discuss in what manner they could express their gratitude to the Squire for his gracious condescension. A collier, inspired of the Muse, wrote a poem on the occasion, which was good in rhyme, but varient in metre and eccentric in grammar; and they unanimously concluded, that to write out this poem in the best round hand, with flourishes, and form a procession to the Hall to present it, would be a delicate compliment. This plan they carried into execution, and hired the brass band from Milltown to accompany them: and the brass band broke out



into 'the measured malice of music' while Derrick was at his dinner, and gave him 'Rory o' More,' followed up by the 'Sicilian Mariners,' with variations for the piccolo. Derrick was forced to come out and receive the poem from the hands of a self-acting minder dressed in a swallow-tail coat and a white waistcoat ; and Miss Clementina laughed herself into fits over the verses ; and then they extolled the young Squire to the skies ; and one and all despised the outcast who was languishing in prison, and had won them the gift ; and forgot entirely the brave little maiden who had helped him ; while the self-acting minder in the swallow-tails and white waistcoat somehow carried away the impression that he was the chief agent in the matter.

All this I must pass over, because there is not time or space to describe it, and beg the reader to interest himself in John Morrison only.

John Morrison had hastened to meet Abel on the day he came out of prison, so as to be the first to tell him the news. And now they

were walking together on the road from Milltown to Hollyss, deep in animated talk. They were as fine a pair of young men as one could meet, tall, strong, broad-shouldered, and active. Abel, whose limbs fairly danced with the joy of exercise after confinement, had set the pace, and the two came swinging along as if they were walking for a wager. But there was a marked difference in their faces; Abel's was open and alight with a score of eager aims and thoughts—moreover, there was the gleam of satisfaction in it left by John's news. He certainly realized that in spite of what he had suffered for them, the villagers would turn him a colder shoulder than ever; but, had he known it, he would still have rejoiced in his success. John's face, on the contrary, was shut in upon one set of thoughts, and was keen only with the keenness of a mind which has allowed itself to be mastered by a single idea; while the eagerness which animated the sulky outlines of the countenance was unpleasantly fox-like.

‘Thou's won thy battle finely, Abe! Ay!

Thou'll be doing work soon as 'ull make us all stare and jump i' our shoon.'

'I'm glad on't, I must say! Lad, thou brought me good news t' meet me first thing. I'd scarce dreamed o' a finish like this.'

'But thou must na call *this* a finish. Thou'rt bound t' go on now.'

'Oh, a mon rests on his oars at times, thou knows. I've had a fairish do, John. Try th' inside o' a gaol thysen,' said Abe, laughing.

'I would, if I'd thy mettle, mon.'

'*Wouldst?*'

'Aye. Dost doubt me? But I have na thy skill. Thou'st fettled you business wunnerful.'

Abel chuckled with secret joy at the thought of the gamekeepers and their poor little victim.

'Now, Abe, thy next step, if thou'll take my advice,' said John, elevating his forefinger with a consequential air, 'ull be to join one o' them secret societies, and get thy importance recognised.'

‘Nay, lad,’ said Abel quietly, his face taking a graver look as Hollyss, with its thousand memories, came in sight; ‘I’ve niver been able to persuade mysen as an Englishmon had need wi’ them. We’re a quiet-moving sort o’ folk, thou knows.’

‘Ah! But thou canst na tell. Might na we hurry things up a bit?’

‘I’ve a deal o’ patience in me,’ said Abe, smiling.

‘Ay, but I have na when I think on’t all! I read i’ th’ papers o’ a squire being shot i’ Ireland, and I fair felt wi’ th’ felly as done it. He wanted sweeping off, did yon squire.’

They had reached a part where the road separated into two: one would take John back to Cockshuthey, the other would take Abel to Christie’s farm.

‘Well, we mun part here, I reckon,’ said Abe, his eyes wandering in the direction of Cockshuthey.

‘Wait a bit,’ said John, with that white eagerness in his face which Marjorie had

noticed and distrusted; 'about that Squire. Thou know's that them societies don't call it *murder* when a mon's took off i' that fashion. It's their way o' making war—agrarian war, they call it. All's fair i' war, thou knows; and a saint and a fine gentlemon thinks no worse o' hissel for shooting an enemy down. Bless yo! I' them societies they cast lots who shall do't when a mon's doomed; or maybe there's no casting o' lots at all—fellies comes for'ard proud and anxious for th' job. And they win a deal o' glory if they do it game, and boast o' it i' public, and the law canna touch 'em. Now this squire o' Ireland, he'd made an enemy o' a mon, same as our Squire's made an enemy o' yo; and the mon just shot him down, as maybe I might shoot yo down from behind yon wall, or a soldier his enemy from back o' a trench. And he got a deal o' glory did yon mon i' Ireland. He was rid o' his foe, and th' people o' their plague.'

Abel's eyes had been resting with a softening light within them upon the far cluster of trees from whence peeped the white corner of

the house that sheltered the woman he loved. He brought them back to John dreamily at last. They startled that worthy as they rested on his face with their dark depths and inscrutable gaze.

‘John,’ said Abel calmly, ‘I haven’t the least idea what thou’rt driving at. Thou knows I can niver think an assassin aught but a detestable scoundrel.’

‘I’ve no special meaning, as I knows on,’ said John sulkily; ‘I were just telling thee a bit o’ th’ news.’

‘It were a foul bit, then. But good-afternoon, lad, and thank thee for coming.’

They parted company. Abel ran down the hill in the direction of his farm, and John stood moodily looking after him.

‘Th’ devil take thee for a humbug and a coward,’ muttered he, shaking his fist in the direction of the retreating Abel. ‘And me next heir to Hollyss, if I hadn’t oughter to be i’ the Squire’s shoon now! I reckoned that my chance were come round.’

## BOOK II.







## CHAPTER I.

THREE YEARS LATER.

'I' the name of truth  
Are ye fantastical, or that indeed  
Which outwardly ye show ?

*Macbeth, Act I., Sc. 3.*

**A**UNT CLEMENTINA was a gay butterfly creature, who had fluttered through thirty-three summers or so of flirtation and matrimonial project. She was a half-sister of Derrick's mother, and boasted a little good blood in her descent, but could lay no claim to wealth. So that all her life she had been more or less dependent upon Derrick's family, a scanty hundred a year of her own being by no means sufficient for all the necessary outlay of her matrimonial

Seeing that marriage was not only an ambition and a felicitous dream, but a commercial necessity, it was hard that Aunt Clementina should have arrived at maturity without realizing it. The truth is, she had played for too high stakes, and was now forced to regret several rejected suitors whose eligibility she recognised when too late. What a pity it is that we are not endowed with the prophetic gift when it comes to little matters of this sort! If we only could have foreseen that James Smith would make his fortune at the bar, and become a Q.C. and a baronet, or that Margaret Alice Brown would turn out a gifted creature about whom all London was talking, why then of course we should have embraced our opportunities and realized that 'aggravating' *might have been*, whose brilliant ghost hovers about our contemptible present.

Derrick called his aunt '*Clem*' when he was in a good temper; when he wanted to revenge himself for some feminine obliquity, he said respectfully '*Aunt Clementina.*' This

arrow always struck home ; every year made it more corroding and poisonous ; for whereas Aunt Clementina, when dressed for an evening, could so disguise her years that she looked like a girl in her teens, Derrick kept up steadily with the march of time, and at twenty-seven was somewhat stately and grave in manner, and chronicled effectually the years she would willingly have forgotten.

At the time our story takes up the thread again, Aunt Clementina's heart bumped heavily against her side whenever the name of a certain Major was mentioned. The bumping was by no means the result of passionate devotion on her part towards him ; it was the indication of an anxiety that he should give some substantial proof of his devotion to her. For half a dozen seasons had he fluttered about her, like a bee over a flower, without making any declaration. Aunt Clementina hated him for it, and would have liked to revenge herself by marrying another. But then—oh, malice of time and fortune ! *where was that other ?*

Now, the marriage with the Major would really have been a good stroke; it would have covered Aunt Clementina's retreat from the field, repaired her disasters, and ended them in moderate glory. Derrick, grinning a little, it must be confessed, good-naturedly wrote to the Major and asked him to spend Christmas at Hollyss Hall, with a goodly company who were likewise invited. Then he told his aunt casually what he had done. Clem's heart went out towards her nephew in fervent blessing, while she pursed her lips and tossed her head. The Major, although proof against her charms, would doubtless succumb to a connection with Hollyss. And then fate, doubly kind, put a second weapon into her hand.

One evening in London, at a crowded *conversazione* to which Derrick had brought her, cross and protesting—for she knew that professors and geniuses were *invariably* old and ugly and dirty, and not in her line—she caught sight of a beautiful dark refined face, which on further investigation proved to belong to a

young man of middle height, who limped very slightly when he walked, but whose figure otherwise was as pleasing as his face. This man was shortly afterwards introduced to her by Derrick as his friend Mr. Pearse. And then an opportunity occurred for the explanation that he was the sculptor who had produced the famous piece in the Academy of that year, and that he was engaged upon a great work for the coming exhibition ; that he was one of the most rising and successful artists of the day, and had attracted attention by the originality with which his works were conceived, and the force with which they were executed ; also, that he had come from Rome on business that would detain him in England for several weeks, and a part of that time was to be spent at Hollyss.

Aunt Clementina's genius rose to the occasion. She coaxed fifty pounds out of Derrick, and entirely reconstructed her wardrobe on an artistic basis.

The day arrived when the first innings was to be played. The Major and Mr. Pearse

were both in the Hall ; so were a selection of Mr. Devonporte's friends, male and female. The great hour when the brilliant company was to assemble in the drawing-room approached. Aunt Clementina frisked and fluttered in her chamber in pleasing agitation ; the unstudied grace, the artless charm, were to be expended on performing the honours of Hollyss ; and she was to wear a costume which should solve the problem of her years.

Clementina Troisages had a very elegant figure and a mass of beautiful fair hair, piquante features and a clear skin. How easy, then, to make up this material into striking beauty ! When the maid had crisped and curled the hair down to the very eyebrows, any lines which anxiety about the Major might have brought there were completely hidden ; and when Clementina herself had added the least touch—no coarse vulgar painting, but the merest artistic sweep—to the eyebrows and lashes, and a faint application of rose to the cheeks—so faint, reader, that you would have sworn :

‘ Sir, ’tis in grain ; Noah’s flood could not undo it—’

and clothed her slim form in a rich blue-green wonderful shimmering Eastern silk, which, made perfectly plain, clung in miraculous folds that revealed yet concealed her form; and when she flung about her waist a loose scarf of cobweb material and marvellous shades, and finished off with the softest and richest of laces at the open throat, and plentiful strings of real pearls, and just a pearl nestling in either little ear, and tall puffs to the sleeves, and more lace and pearls on the arms, and a sprinkling of them in the hair, and a fan of delicate white feathers in her hand—when all this was complete, Clementina Troisages stood before her mirror—nineteen years of age, and a pictorial beauty, a ‘sprightly maiden of Love’s Court.’

Derrick and Mr. Pearse were already in the drawing-room when Miss Troisages descended to receive her guests. The door opened, the marvellous garment sailed in, and advanced straight towards Mr. Pearse.

I regret to have to record that Derrick, when he saw the undulating figure bearing



down upon his friend, lifted the evening paper, which he was reading, to his face, and retired behind it suffocated with silent laughter.

For my part, dear reader, I do not want to laugh. Poor Clementina Troisages ! I scarcely know whom we have to blame for your existence—the society that made the mould, or the material that is so apt to take it. Surely not altogether are you to be censured for the spectacle of yourself, any more than your no less disagreeable counterpart—the man who believes that every woman he comes near is a candidate for his favour—can be censured for his unbecoming folly. Are you not both the fruits of society ? the outcome of false opinion and artificial circumstances ?

Let us be thankful that there are hundreds of women too occupied in healthy activity, too fenced in by their own proud vigour, to care or condescend to hunt a husband ; and that there are a few men left, ‘ even in Sardis,’ who preserve a modest estimation of their personal charms. Derrick was such an one. He was literally unconscious that at the pre-

sent moment there were three young ladies in the room who would have given the pretty hair off their heads for a sign of his favour. One, with stormy grey eyes, 'modest, yet withal lavish' of herself, was passionately in love with the genial young Squire,—and I pity her ; another, with a pinched look in her delicate face and a somewhat forced smile, had the whole of her own and her falling family's hopes risked on the speculation of marrying him,—and I pity her no less ; another, a lively flirt, 'unchecked by pride or scrupulous doubt,' with a score of protesting lovers, wanted the Squire, simply and solely because he did not care twopence for her, and never knew whether she was in the room or not ; disappointed vanity prompted her longing ; it was a wild, heartburning, jealous want—and I pity the empty breast pierced by that sword. But why catalogue them ? Truly—

'A lion amongst ladies is a most dreadful thing.'

But they were all smiles and good manners

—beautiful, lively, well-dressed—and there were no signs of the tragedy (serio-comic) going on—a tragedy to my mind so grievous to dwell upon, so painful to depict, that I would rather write out remorselessly from beginning to end the story of Marjorie Morrison's sorrows than a single chapter of this.

The drawing-room at Hollyss was a stately apartment, furnished, it must be confessed, principally in the Louis Quatorze style, with unconnected additions which, however, had the charm of a gradual growth, being the legacies from centuries of successive tastes and idiosyncrasies. A room newly furnished, with rigid attention in the minutest detail to the unbroken harmonies of art, is a savourless joy compared to that which the ancestral hotch-potch of an old mansion can offer. The hand of the live upholsterer is in the one, in the other the *mortes-mains* of a score of stately and gracious beings.

The fire-place in the Hollyss drawing-room was of stone, elaborately carved up to the ceiling, with the arms and motto painted

midway; it was adorned, being Christmas-time, with holly, ivy, and mistletoe. The curtains and coverings—a new edition of those Mrs. Morrison admired—were of deep amber. It is a colour that will suit both the fair and the dark; and the maids and matrons who were on this occasion clustered about this background looked, either consciously or unconsciously, according to the tone and capacity of their minds, particularly well when thrown out against it.

Miss Troisages, nestling upon an amber lounge with Miss Annabella De Dounes Heurtley, the lively flirt, was carrying on a conversation with her friend in undertone. Miss Courtiss, with the stormy eyes, was standing near the mantelpiece, playing with her fan and looking dreamily into the fire. Miss Maxley-Gordon, of the delicate face and strictly stock-jobbing mind, was ingratiating herself with a rich and childless widow, who spread her black velvet and Venetian point over the half of an amber sofa; and a group of simple, unaffected, lady-like girls were

clustered about a table, looking at prints and curiosities. The gentlemen were not in the room, and Miss Troisages, Miss Heurtley, and Miss Maxley-Gordon were a trifle more natural than before.

‘How *did* you get into that dress, Clementina?’ asked Miss Heurtley. ‘You look as though you had been poured in hot.’

‘It is a good fit, I believe. And that is an unexpected mercy, for my ordinary dress-maker refused to make the costume after my plan, and I had to apply to an art costumier. They go in, as a rule, for consumption and bagginess, you know.’

‘And the costume no doubt is in honour of your friend with the face after Botticelli, who sat to your right at dinner. Pray who is he?’

‘A friend of Derrick’s; an artist picked up in Rome a couple of years ago, I believe. But not one of your struggling unknown artists; princes and noblemen have been haunting his studio. I am told he is quite the fashion. His name is Pearse.’

‘Ah! the man who did the Andromeda, of course. What a terrible fate to carry such a name with that face! Artists ought always to be Italian.’

‘And very easily contrived, if they only had the wit. It would be a difference of a thousand a year, I dare say, to Mr. Pearse, if he would Italianize his name. But I am told he is eccentric.’

‘Indeed. Did you see the Andromeda?’

‘Can you ask? All London went. I was informed that it ought to be *contemplated* to be understood, so I sat before it for half-an-hour.’

‘And did you find out anything particular at the end of that time?’ asked Miss Courtiss, joining in suddenly.

‘A revelation! Quite an unveiling! It is the old Grecian art reborn. I saw that *quite* clearly. By the way, there is such an odd story connected with him.’

‘With the man of the unspeakable name?’

‘Yes. They say that he is haunted by a

face, or something of the kind, and that he is always modelling it over and over again.'

'A woman's face?' said Miss Courtiss musingly.

'Certainly.'

Miss Heurtley lifted her fan, and looked over the top of it with her languishing eyes; then she sank luxuriously back in the cushions, tossed one large brown arm over her head, and flung the other large brown arm over the side of the sofa, with the red feathers of her fan sweeping from her hand, while she half sleepily closed her lids.

'Why are you posing as a study of Alma Tadema?' asked Miss Courtiss.

'I should like,' said Miss Heurtley, with a kind of cold energy, and ignoring Miss Courtiss's question, 'to have the bowling out of that face.'

'Change your dress first, my dear,' said Clem, with some asperity.

'Terra-cotta is not a bad colour, even though the mode is wrong,' replied the flirt lazily.

‘The arms and shoulders are quite the thing,’ said Miss Courtiss, turning coldly away; ‘Miss Troisages, will you tell us something more of what our duties next week will be?’

‘Ah, the charades! That is even more thrilling than Andromeda! Are the costumes arranged?’ said Miss Heurtley, suddenly starting up.

‘Derrick is going to leave that part to our individual tastes. But he means to talk over things to-night with you, leaving me to amuse the guests as well as I can. I may as well tell you at once that he has some secret about the evening.’

‘Come, that is cool! Of course we must make him tell us,’ said Miss Heurtley, now thoroughly returning from Cleopatra to latter-day slang.

‘And why?’ said Miss Courtiss.

‘I like to be in every man’s confidence that I meet. I shall make him tell me, of course.’

‘Try and do so,’ said Clem shortly.



‘You think I am afraid? Bah! I have a soldier’s courage, and men love to be besieged.’

‘For my part, I would as soon ask Mr. Devonporte, or any other man, for a gift, as endeavour to force him into telling a secret he wished to keep to himself,’ said Miss Courtiss.

‘Oh! men like to be tormented, I tell you,’ persisted Miss Heurtley, with an unbecoming air of knowledge.

‘Do they? *Always?*’

‘Here they come,’ said Clementina; ‘you have your opportunity, Annabella.’

The door opened, and the gentlemen appeared.

‘Mr. Devonporte,’ cried Annabella, advancing and fluttering her fan, ‘you are wanted here on urgent business.’

The Squire looked at her with his gravest air and most polite finish of manner.

‘I am much honoured and delighted!’

‘Miss Troisages tells us you have kept back some of the arrangements for the

charade evening. Now, is this quite fair and honourable ?'

'Miss Troisages is aware,' said Derrick, smiling, but looking '*aunt*' with his eyes, 'that I have so decidedly concluded to keep a part of the arrangements a secret, that I have not even confided my plans to her. Miss Courtiss, I should be greatly obliged if you would play for us a little.'

And so the evening went on in apparent happiness and mirth, Clementina absorbing Mr. Pearse, and ignoring the Major, who hovered about in perplexed agonies ; Derrick, passing from one to another with kindly attentions to each in turn, as unconscious of the drama which those around him were playing as, in their turn, they were ignorant of his aims and thoughts.

At last the evening was over ; the guests had departed ; the ladies who were staying in the house vanished upstairs, like a flock of doves, with soft rustle of dresses and silvery laughter ; the Major and the others were safe in the smoking-room. Derrick passed his hand

through his friend's arm, and opened the doors on to the balcony.

'I'm as glad as a boy to have you here, Zach,' said he, looking rather anxiously at the flushed face and shining eyes. 'Did you enjoy it? Or is this kind of thing as slow to you as to me?'

'I'm not as used to it as you are, you see. Yes, I enjoyed it.'

'Not used to it! They've fêted you enough in Rome.'

'They have—thanks to your exertions and the Prince honouring my studio with a visit. But there's the same difference between society in Rome and *this*, that there is between a tropical garden and an English conservatory.'

'Do you like the women, Zach? Do you think them very beautiful, and delightful, and good?'

'I think they're beautiful. But I don't like them—except one.'

'Blessed old Zach! The same here as in Rome. "Man alive!" I wish everyone were

as straightforward as you. Which is the exception ?

‘The grey-eyed woman—Miss Courtiss, I think she is.’

‘Good Lord! What an odd chap you are! I thought *of course* you were going to say Aunt Clementina.’

‘Miss Troisages? I haven’t seen her.’

‘Not seen her, Zach? You must be mad. She was sitting by you at dinner, and near you a considerable portion of the evening.’

‘And how can I see a lady who is close to me, and talking? A face must be still to be seen. I just looked round at the rest.’

‘Good. Do you always prefer them in perspective? Can you see them better so?’

‘Of course I can. Don’t you step back to look at a statue?’

‘H’m. How flattered they’d all be!’

‘Have I said anything wrong? I’m afraid I shall always be an awkward fool, Devon-porte.’

‘Zach, I wouldn’t have a hair of your head altered for the world. Nothing that you say ever comes wrong to me. You needn’t positively ask the ladies to stand off, but you’re quite at liberty to admire the one that does. I suppose Miss Courtiss was the stillest and most perspectiveally inclined of the lot.’

‘She was very still, and has storm in her eyes.’

‘She shall sit opposite you to-morrow at dinner. But what did Miss Troisages talk about?’

‘Come, Devonporte, why am I being catechized?’

‘Am I not thy guide, philosopher, and friend? And is she not my defenceless aunt?’


‘Oh, well! I think she talked about art.’

‘Zach!’

‘Yes?’

‘You are deceiving me.’

‘Am I?’ said Zach, attempting to repress a smile.



---

‘ You are. I don’t believe you’ve a ghost  
of an idea what she talked about.’

‘ To tell you the truth then—I haven’t !’

‘ All right. Come and smoke.’



## CHAPTER II.

HOW DERRICK WENT TO MILLTOWN.

'No hope ! no help ! then wretched I  
Must lose, must lack, must pine, and die.'

WEBSTER.

**C**HRISTMAS EVE. The day closed in earlier than usual, for the snow had fallen perpetually, and the light of the leaden skies was soon spent. A quiet melancholy day of muffled sounds, of blank fields and effaced landmarks, and a misty pall over the distance. The fowls went to roost early at Cockshuthey ; and the cattle who were gathered in the sheds munched last year's hay from the mangers, and forgot in the welcome warmth the meads and fresh pastures of summer.


Christmas Eve had to be kept like other festivities, however little heart there was for the work. Marjorie's hands had decked the kitchen and parlour, and now, glad to shut out the gloom, she had lit the candles in either room, and thrown fresh fuel upon the fires, and had sat down quietly to work. There were the changes of three years in her face, but it was lovelier than ever. Experience alone, when unattended by evil passions, cannot mar the beauty in a young countenance ; attended by thoughts and efforts that refine and elevate, it can increase it. And there was an inexpressible something in Marjorie's face which told at once the history of the last few years. Patience, devotion, gentleness, and steadfastness will bring such a look upon the plainest physiognomy and make it attractive ; how much more, therefore, will they ennoble a loveliness equal to Marjorie's !

Marjorie's dress was not quite what it used to be. She looked like a lady attired with scrupulous simplicity ; her hair was knotted a little lower upon her neck, and she wore the



dainty laces which, however simple, give the necessary and refining finish. Moreover, she had an air of settled, quiet dignity which marked a distinct progress in her woman's history. But her hands were coarsened by hard work, and now, as ever, they were busy knitting stockings such as a labourer might buy. Ever and anon she glanced down to the book before her. The room was very little changed; the vase of wax flowers under the glass shade, the stuffed birds imprisoned in like manner, the framed ingenuity in needle-work, were all there as before: so was the mauve-and-green woollen antimacassar on the armchair, and the work-box in the window with the crochet doyley thrown over it; but there were some dainty touches added, and in one corner of the room, where was the small bookcase filled with rows of volumes, the fire-light, which had flashed about the other objects derisively, nestled in rosy comfort.

Presently Marjorie looked up and listened. There was a sound of some one stamping the frozen snow from his feet on the doorstep



outside ; this was followed by a man's brisk tread across the kitchen ; the door opened, and Derrick stood upon the threshold, the frost sprinkling his hair, and the snow lying thick upon his clothes.

Marjorie rose with a smile of welcome, and held out her hand.

'Derrick ! I am very glad to see you !'

'Not as glad as I am to see you !' said he, clasping her hand firmly.

'Come and take these damp things off. You'll be wet through in a minute in this warm room.'

He obeyed her, and they went together through the kitchen, where the glow from the red-hot embers filled every corner with rosy light and deep shadows.

In the back Derrick began to discard his ulster and pay attention to his wet boots. Marjorie, attentive and careful, took the damp coat from his hand, shook it out, and hung it up to dry. She took no notice of his half demur, but with a peculiarly grave dignity anticipated his needs and supplied them.

When she had satisfied herself that he was in no danger from damp clothes, they returned to the kitchen, and stood together in the pleasant glow of the fire. Throughout, her manner was that of a sister caring for a beloved brother, save for a certain touch of reticence; Derrick's to her was profoundly respectful. It was only when every now and then he turned and allowed his eyes to rest upon her that his secret discovered itself.

'And how are they?' he asked.

'Much the same. Perhaps mother is a little more like herself.'

'And where are they?'

'Father's in the sheds. Mother's upstairs.'

'And have you heard yet of John?'

'Not a word. No, not a word.'

'I did all I could, Marjorie. I don't think there is any other step to take.'

'No. If he chose to leave us—to run off in that strange way—we have no power to make him come back. Nor would it be desirable.'

‘How long is it since he left?’

‘It would be a year last autumn.’

‘I think he has enlisted and gone abroad.’

‘So do I. Perhaps it was for the best.

He was always so difficult to deal with—poor lad! so restless and dissatisfied. Maybe, if he sees the world a bit he will come back and be a good son. This is the second Christmas Eve we have been without him. I had hardly the heart to put up the holly.’

‘And how is the work getting on? I fear it is hard times for your father.’

‘It is hard. And the paying another labourer instead of John is a sore pull on us. But we got rid of Sally, and that eased us a little.’

‘Eased you?’ said Derrick, smiling sadly; ‘and all the extra work to do.’

‘I think it is a good thing for mother to have more than enough work, so that she does not spend her strength in fretting and thinking; and for me, of course, it is nothing.’

Derrick lifted one of her hands and looked reverently at it.

‘Marjorie, Marjorie! what would I give if I might ease this hand of all its hard labour.’


She withdrew her fingers gently, and yet firmly.

‘You have done,’ she said, ‘a thousand times more for me than that.’

The Squire passed his hand slowly over his face; when he removed it his cheek was paler than before; he closed his mouth firmly, and turned slightly aside.

It was not only increased years that made the change in his face. There were traces from the same finger that had touched Marjorie’s; the record of good deeds was there—the signs of sorrow nobly borne.

Marjorie, who had been looking up at him, turned away also, and stood now with downcast eyes. She knew as no one else on earth would ever know it, what was the Squire’s worth. It was no brilliant act of heroism to which he could lay claim; it was



one of those unostentatious deeds which the world might have 'passed in making up the main account.'

When three years ago, to his own great anguish, the hopelessness of his love became apparent to him, at the same time he perceived that some great trouble had come into Marjorie's life. There was not much to guide him; but he noticed that she shrank in agitation and terror from any lover-like display on his side, and he believed that pressure of some kind was being put upon her. Then he remembered the refined thoughts with which he had entered on his suit, and his resolve was immediately taken.


What it cost him was known only to himself; but he had not added to her trouble by pleading for what her parents were anxious to give; he had made no proposal; he had never told her in so many words of his love; he had shown it only by the tenderness of his acts; he did not ask what was her secret; he had sheltered her throughout by his complete silence. And having withdrawn his

suit, he set himself to put right what was so evidently wrong in her life. In great measure he had succeeded.

‘The farmer,’ as Derrick said calmly to himself, ‘could not blame her for refusing to marry a man who never asked her.’

It must not be supposed that Derrick made any unnatural sacrifice in acting as he did. There was no strained consciousness in his nature; he was clearly convinced by certain unerring signs that Marjorie had no other love than that of cousinly affection to bestow upon him. Had there been the least hope left for him, he would have fought for his happiness like any other man. But there was none. And his self-denial lay in the self-control with which he abstained from a suit that could only have brought her into trouble.

Old Morrison was obliged to conclude, after a time, that he had been mistaken in the Squire’s intentions; and the continued friendship between the young people precluded the idea that she might have refused him privately. As to the rest, he was puzzled.



He could never feel convinced that Abel was given up. Indeed, about a year after the first intimation of their love for each other, Abel, whose position had improved and was still rising, ventured, although he had not at present a farm of his own, to come forward with his suit. But the farmer had met him with the same unsparing scorn and inhuman contempt which he exhibited before his daughter when her lover's name was mentioned.

Then Greenhough's manner, which had been respectful and courteous, changed to one of stern decision, and he informed Morrison that he was aware that he had won his daughter's love, and that he should marry her when and how he chose. This independent tone startled the farmer; he was further perplexed when, on the evening of the same day, Marjorie attempted to open the subject again; and on his cutting her short with a cold and brutal speech, she replied briefly and firmly :

‘ Then, father, I shall marry him when he wishes it—without your consent.’



The farmer's fear and hatred of this marriage was founded entirely upon his own pride ; the happiness and welfare of his child did not come into the question. But upon considering the matter, he determined, since his former treatment had failed to compel submission, to try what a milder plan would do. The Squire's presence had led to a considerable alleviation of Marjorie's position ; the parents could not ill-treat her before the eyes of this courteous and powerful ally ; but after the evening upon which she had brought herself to utter that decisive speech, a further change for the better occurred. Marjorie found herself, not caressed as she used to be (save secretly by her mother), but treated with marked and unfailing favour and respect. Old Morrison's hope was to *win* her from Abel now. Had he succeeded ? That was the puzzle. There was a gentleness, yet a reserve in Marjorie's manner, that perplexed him. Tender, devoted, she yet had a certain aloofness of attitude, and kept the air of one whose life is apart. Still, she did not

mention Abel again, and as two years passed away and nothing terrible had happened, his surmises and alarms began to slumber, and there were times when he forgot the existence of the obnoxious lover in the satisfaction he derived from his daughter's continued presence and help.

What her devotion was costing her young life, of that he never so much as dreamed.

This was the condition of things on the Christmas Eve when Derrick paid his visit.

'I'm so sick of the party at the Hall,' remarked the Squire, after their silence.

'Already!' said Marjorie, smiling. 'Why, they have only just come, and you yourself have only been here for a week.'

'I'm downright weary of every one of their faces. Except Zach's,' he added, after a pause. 'They think I've gone to Milltown on urgent business—business so urgent that the house of Devonporte would fall with a crash if it were not performed. I need not be back until late, when I shall reappear pale and fagged from my exertions. Marjorie,

have you a fire in the other room, and could I spend Christmas Eve with you ?

‘I think it’s rather wicked of you,’ said Marjorie, laughing in spite of herself; ‘but I certainly have put a fire in the other room, and your appearance was not wholly unexpected.’

‘Come along then.’

‘And how about Milltown?’ said she, busying herself in arranging a comfortable seat near the fire in the parlour for him. ‘Please sit there, Derrick; it suits me better to kneel upon the hearthrug and stare into the fire. I’m so short of ideas, you see, and the coals lend them to me.’

‘Oh,’ said Derrick, seating himself, ‘as to Milltown, I shall draw upon my imagination, if they are rude enough to question me; and society has no manners in that respect. Clem’s there, you know—my Aunt Clementina. Marjorie, I’m going to ask you for all sorts of favours to-night. Shall you grant them?’

‘Yes, indeed, if I can.’

Derrick leaned his head on the back of his chair and turned away, looking restlessly at the wall.

‘Should you like to see Zach, Marjorie?’ he asked suddenly.

‘Oh!’

‘You would, I see. Well, you shall.’

‘But I fear he can’t come here,’ said Marjorie, looking distressed. ‘I’m not sure——is he very much changed? I can only think of him in the blue blouse he used to wear.’

‘And I have great difficulty in remembering that he ever wore such a garment. He is very much improved, I suppose—he looks like a gentleman now, if that is any improvement. And the good living and the skill of doctors have done a great deal for his lameness.’

‘And he has talked with princes and noblemen, and seen Rome and Florence, and made himself a famous name. How wonderful it is!’

‘Yes: he has got on, Marjorie.’

‘And I know perfectly well that it is all your doing. Zach never had the least bit of push in him, and he’d have been just jostled out of the world if it had not been for some one’s strong arm. You never will acknowledge anything, and you sit looking quietly at the fire ; but I know better than if you spoke that it is all your doing.’

‘That it is *not*. I haven’t modelled the Andromeda, for one little item. And as to push, Zach has a quiet force and resolve about him which does just as well.’

‘But it is you who have supplied him with money, increased education, and friends.’

‘As to education, he gave himself that as a lad. For the rest, he has supplied me with the best friend I ever had, except Howell. Marjorie, would you like to see him ?’

‘I think,’ she said, hesitating, ‘that he might not like. He has left me so far behind.’

‘Oh no !’ said Derrick, hastily and gently ; ‘no, he has not, Marjorie, indeed. He bade

me tell you to remember what passed between you the last time you met.'

Derrick leaned back in his chair when he had said this, threw his arms over his head, and again turned his eyes away. Marjorie, perplexed and uncertain, knew not what to answer.

'Tell him, please, that I *do* remember. But, Derrick, perhaps it would be as well that we should not meet.'

She spoke with great unwillingness and distress.

'Marjorie, I'm going to manage it so that it will be no complication or distress to either of you. I have a strong reason for wishing it. *I'll do for Clem, or I'll see!*'

'What can you mean?'

'Nothing. The natural savage in my breast: manly sentiments that you won't understand. But, Marjorie, it is a whim of my own—that's the fact. You yielded once to a whim of mine; and tell me, if you have ever had occasion to regret it?'

'What was the whim, Derrick?'

‘Don’t you remember? In the Gallery—our vow?’

‘Oh,’ cried Marjorie in sudden agitation, covering her face with her hands, ‘*don’t* remind me!’

‘Why should I not?’

‘Because you have been good, and noble, and true to me, and I have not been true to you!’

‘How so?’

‘Derrick,’ she said, speaking quickly and suddenly, ‘I have kept a secret from you which I ought to have told you all along. *Ought*, that is, if I was to be perfectly true to you; *ought not*, if I was to be true to others. God knows that I have not brought the complication into my life by any voluntary act of my own; it has seemed to grow there. Duty is hard to seek and find amidst it all; truth still more so. I can only strive and pray, and feel unutterable grief where I fail.’

‘Oh,’ said Derrick gently, ‘the complication is less than you think. I have known your secret all the time.’

‘Do not say that!’ said she, looking at him anxiously.

‘Not the ins and outs, not the whole of it, but the part that is important to myself. Dear beautiful cousin, pluck that thorn from your breast, from henceforth! You have been true enough to me.’

Marjorie was silent, not trusting herself to speak, for fear of falling into some error. Did he really know?

‘And now for my plan. You and he are to see each other and yet not speak. I will contrive it so.’

‘I do not like,’ said Marjorie uneasily, ‘anything that is contrived. It never seems to me right: it never ends well. I do not want to see Zachary.’

‘I have promised him. Now, Marjorie, do not look distressed. Have you any occasion to distrust me?’

‘Oh no! Whom should I trust if I did not trust you? I don’t know that there is any harm. You have not told me what you want.’



‘I want you to do something for *me*.’

‘If you wish me to do something for *you*, Derrick, then it all looks straightforward. I know that you will not ask me for anything that would place me in—that it would be wrong and impossible for me to grant.’

‘Oh, it is quite simple. They are going to act charades, or tableaux rather, at the Hall next week. Now, I am arranging one entirely to myself.’

‘And you want me to help you in some way? Of course I will. Is it to make something for you to wear on the occasion?’

‘I want you to act a part with me.’

Marjorie looked up with an incredulous laugh.

‘What *can* have put such a thing in your head? You might as well ask me to—*waltz*. Of course I cannot do such thing.’

‘Heaven forbid that I should ever see attempt it. All you will have to do is to the dress I have provided, and stand for :

moments in a certain attitude, and then you will quietly return to the farm.'

'But I should have to stand and be stared at. [ *couldn't !* ' said Marjorie, crimsoning at the thought.

'You will not think of it. You will think of the same things I have in my head.'

'And what are those?'

'I mean to tell them all the story of the Marjorie Devonporte who ran away with Martin Morrison. I mean to have the portrait hung in its place in the Gallery at last. And I mean that you and I shall act over again in a tableau the part they played in reality.'

Marjorie looked grave.

'It is a beautiful thought, and yet I have all sorts of instincts against it. I feel as though we had better leave that subject alone.'

'No !' cried Derrick, with sudden excitement; 'it won't leave me alone! It is partly for my own relief that I want to act it. Would that what I wish done could be done in very truth! But since it cannot, let it at

least be acted ! Stand before the world—my world—for five minutes, Marjorie, and, in a picture, give yourself to me.'

She had never seen him losing his self-control before ; and now, after these words, he leaned forward, and buried his face in his hands. When he spoke the last sentence she shrank back at first with almost a shudder, fearful of what might come next ; then she recovered herself, and looked at him sorrowfully.

Marjorie was kneeling upon the hearthrug, with one lovely arm lifted to the mantel-shelf above her head, the hand of the other resting lightly upon a chair. The firelight played over her form, over her beautiful swelling bosom, her white throat, her regal chin and mouth, the whole tender exquisite face, hiding in the masses of fair hair, and deepening the shadows under the long lashes. Derrick dared not uncover his eyes and look at her again until he had mastered himself. Having once raised a chivalric standard of love which would not allow to him the natural relief of

speech, the words 'I love you' had to be beaten back from his lips as though they had been a temptation to sin.

Marjorie rose from her knees and withdrew to a seat at a little distance, where, with her hands lightly crossed on her knees, she remained for a moment or two with her head bent in thought.

'If I really believed,' she said presently, with some hesitation, 'that there was any good or any wisdom in yielding to your wish, I would do so. I cannot bear to see you troubled, Derrick. But I do not believe there is.'

He lifted his head and conjured up a smile.

'The truth is, I shan't be here to trouble you much longer. It is just a whim, and I've a mind to be humoured; and you, good coz, have a mind to humour me. So I consider it all settled, and the rest I shall manage my own way. Listen, Marjorie! If a fellow falls down and breaks his leg and it won't mend, he has it cut off and it is done with;

if he has a bad tooth, he has it drawn; if he has an incurable disease—say consumption—he goes off to another country. And I have an incurable heart-disease, and after this merry carousal at the Hall, this mumming and acting, I am going to pack all my interesting guests off, and I myself shall follow shortly.’

‘Where to? For how long? What to do?’

‘To Rome first, with Zach. Then I think it would be interesting to go and help dig up Troy, or fight in the East, or explore the North Pole, or on a mission to China or the centre of Tartary. They don’t let you off under six years at the latter place, I believe. Perhaps they will make me Prime Minister.’

‘Oh, Derrick!’ cried Marjorie, with great distress, ‘you make me so sorry.’

‘Come! It is better I should go.’

‘It is better. Yes; I know it.’ And then she added in a firmer tone: ‘It is the only thing left for you to do. But, nevertheless, I am filled with self-reproach and sorrow.’

‘And now I must return to my guests. It

is high time I was back from Milltown. Do I look fagged, Marjorie ?

‘ A little pale, Derrick.’

‘ No worse ? They think I have called on the lawyer ; that I am raking up something against a recalcitrant villager—Greenhough, in short.’

Marjorie rose to her feet. The mention of Abel’s name from Derrick always made her grow cold to the very heart. To forgive his past sin against the man she loved, would have been impossible had not Abel himself condoned and explained it away, and the Squire’s goodness to herself covered it. But the enmity between the two was a continual anguish to her. For a moment she had hoped that Derrick had really guessed her secret, but now she saw plainly that he had not. What did he dream it was ? She did not know. His careless mention of Greenhough cut her to the soul. She marvelled that a word could cause such sudden revulsion in her feeling towards a fellow-creature for whom, a moment ago, she had felt warm

and real affection ; but she chided herself for her unreasonable anger.

‘Derrick,’ she said wearily, ‘I wish you would not speak so.’

Her voice caused him to look up in surprise.

‘Why, Marjorie ! What have I said wrong ?’

He rose in a moment, and stood by her side. The secret was nearly out : it seemed to rush to her lips with every beat of her heart. Would that she had spoken it ! But the long habit of faithfulness and self-control was stronger than any sudden emotion. She was not sure that Abel would wish her to tell *him* ; she could not break the promise which she had given to her father. She mastered herself and looked, smiling rather sorrowfully, into his face.

‘I do not like you to speak of one of my class like that. Especially such an one as Abel Greenhough.’

‘I knew you were acquainted with him, but not that you knew him well. You must be

quite a politician, Marjorie ! I am sorry if I have hurt you.'

'I am no politician ; but I know——'

She had begun to speak rather fast again, her heart beating ; but she checked herself, partly in pride, partly in caution. Would she stoop to defend Abel, to explain what he was, to screen or shield him by means of her power over Derrick ? No ; in her pride and absolute trust, she rightly disdained to do so.

'What do you know ?'

'I know Abel Greenhough to be a good man.'

'I dare say, Marjorie. It is not his goodness or his badness I have to do with, it is his political and social opinions. But how should you care about matters of this sort, or understand how they affect men's feeling towards each other ? You are apart from all that. You must not let such matters disturb you.'

She looked up at him gravely and quietly. It was in moments like this that in her heart she clung closer to Abel, and exulted in the



deliberate choice she had made of him over Derrick.

‘Well! will you come next week?’

‘Indeed yes. I will do my best for you.’

‘Thanks, my best of cousins. We shall part so soon, Marjorie.

‘Yes; but only in the way that is best—in order to meet one day again as good friends.’

‘Ah, yes! Marjorie, I have a notion that somehow—indifferent sort of being though I am at the best—I am a better sort of fellow than I should have been had I never known you. A glimpse of heaven, you see, is better than nothing at all.’

Derrick was right. For a beautiful woman’s greatest use lies often in drawing out the supreme good that is hidden in the natures which she touches.

But Marjorie of her own accord took his hand and laid her fingers upon his arm, and looked up at him with the grave yet reticent affection she had shown throughout. The

sense of the near parting gave her courage and freedom to speak.

‘ You say these things, Derrick, to take off the sharp edge of my self-reproach. But it is a poor heaven which you would have chosen, and one that God *never* intended for you. Be strong, and shake yourself free from your delusion. Yet remember that, to the end of my life, in my poor, broken, unworthy way, I shall think of you with gratitude, reverence, and affection—above other men. And now, with the exception of the few moments when we act together, this is the last time you must see me. I thank you that of late you have made your visits so few.’

She spoke very firmly yet very tenderly. Derrick, without a word, but with a face as pale as death, laid his hand upon the fingers that rested on his arm for a moment, and then quietly left the room.

She did not follow him to help him with his coat ; but when she heard the house-door close, with a sudden impulse she threw the shutters open and looked after him. She saw

the strong graceful form hurrying away over the snow, the fur collar of the coat turned up, the hands thrust into the pockets, the head bent. In the spectral light of the moon she saw even the footsteps that he left, though more flakes fell before morning and covered them up. It was such a picture as cuts itself into the memory. And ever afterwards when she thought of Derrick, she saw him hurrying away from her over the snow, into the night.



### CHAPTER III.

#### A VISITOR AT OUZEL HOLE.


‘For in her mind no thought there is  
But how she may be true, I wis.’

SURREY.

**T**HE one large room in Old Scrag’s house, the long-windowed weaving-shed, was consecrated to the use of Abel. It was his bedroom, tool-house, and pre-eminently his study. At one end of the apartment, pushed into the smallest possible space, were his bed, washing-stand, and chest of drawers. The latter contained a goodly store of linen—coarse but plentiful—for here it must be confessed that Abel was somewhat of a dandy; the rest of his wardrobe was meagre, but of shirts he would

have a dozen at a time, and use them in extravagant profusion — so, at least, his mother thought when washing-day arrived. But then Abel had always been masterful about some things. He had ingeniously constructed for himself in early days that very unnecessary piece of furniture a washing-stand, and had caused his mother to purchase an unreasonably large basin to put into it. But in spite of this, she discovered that he was in the habit of rising early and going down to the mere, and, without asking leave of the owner of Moorfield, plunging head-first into that dangerous flood, and returning to breakfast with the beads of wet shining in his hair.

After this the good woman, haunted by secret anxieties, watched his actions narrowly. One night, with that restless affection which needs must get a sight of its object at unseasonable hours, she crept into his room after she knew that he had gone to sleep, and there she found him lying upon his bed with the winds of heaven blowing through



the open pane upon his broad bare breast. Many and many a time afterwards did she creep in to draw the clothes over him and tuck him up as though he still were a child, but never did she venture to close the window upon the heavily sleeping man.

All these things pointed unmistakably to the fact that Abel would never grow up respectable and be as others; these ill-regulated ablutions and airings showed him as a true nephew of his uncle, a veritable descendant of the Scrags; she shed many tears over it, and never saw him return glowing from his morning bath without a pang; but she loved him too well to rebuke him for being somewhat of a disappointment to her, and followed him day by day with patient, uncomplaining, and indeed admiring affection. Once she went so far as to entreat him to procure a suit of broadcloth for Sundays, instead of roaming about in summer on these days coatless, in the full glory of a clean blue shirt. After many groans, Abel set out obediently to Milltown to make the

purchase. Unfortunately, he fell in with a bookstall on his way to the tailor's; the temptation was too much for him; he returned with a second-hand copy of a 'History of the Elizabethan Dramatists' and a German Dictionary. After that she contented herself with laying out a shilling or two in the purchase of a bright-coloured silk tie, to knot under his shirt-collar; she offered it to him timidly. But Abel liked pretty things, and took it with a smile and a kiss, and put it on; only he had such a habit when he was hot of throwing it off and girding it round his waist as a belt. What would people think of him?

How little did the good woman dream that this picturesque and negligent clothing had crept into beautiful Marjorie Morrison's heart as the very ideal of manly attire.

Under the long window in Abel's room was a litter of gardening tools, a favourite sickle or two, and a miscellaneous collection of corn and seed specimens. Then came a rough writing-table, and beyond shelves,

which he had himself put up, and which were loaded with books. Winter and summer, the greater part of the evening and the early hours of the night had Abel sat studying here, through all the years (save the time spent in London) of his boyhood and early manhood. It was no wonder that he was a good German scholar, and could manage to read some of the Latin authors in the original ; nor is it to be marvelled at that he had learned a little algebra and Euclid from Zach, giving him in return a taste for history and literature.

The intelligent working-man is generally something of a prig ; but the discipline of Abel's life had effectually prevented that fatal result ; then his London experiences caused him to take a very humble estimate of his own attainments, while Zach's superior genius and success was likewise a wholesome corrective.

In spite of his extravagance in books and shirts, Abel was very well to do. He had been able to put away from his high wages a considerable amount in the savings bank ; his



mother had had a small independence left her by her husband, and as she also contributed to the household expenses by taking in washing, she was secretly laying by and increasing this for her son. Ann Scrag was the only poor member of the family, and she supported herself by working at the mill; Old Scrag, whose wants were very few, lived on the small interest of his savings, and the house was his own. But the people, who could not credit him with the respectability of property, averred that he earned his livelihood by poaching and begging, or left his sisters to support him; and many were the stories of the secret dealings and doings of this unholy household.

It was therefore no wonder that no one visited them except the Pearses; and now that Zach had left the 'country-side,' there was only Lavinia and occasionally her mother to make friendly calls upon them—unless, indeed, the farmers and labourers, who came in to bring a message or talk over farming matters with Abel, are to be counted. So

That when, two or three days after the Christmas Eve described in the last chapter, a light step paused at their door, and a timid knock followed immediately, those of the household who heard it were filled with surprise. Abel was in his bedroom reading; Ann had remained at Milltown to attend a weekly service in Mr. Howell's chapel; there were only Old Scrag and Mrs. Greenhough in the kitchen.

Old Scrag looked round; he had sat for a whole hour by the fire without moving or speaking. Mrs. Greenhough, who was sewing by the table, listened for a moment, and then said :

‘ It'll be the wind.’

But the knock came again.

‘ Well, I niver !’ said Mrs. Greenhough.

Then she rose and opened the door, and stood looking at her visitor with the cold unwelcoming air which those whom the world has ill-treated naturally assume in their turn.

‘ May I come in ?’ said a very timid voice from the snow and the darkness.

‘Certainly, lass! Walk in. Yo’ll be starved.’

Marjorie—for she it was—entered at once, stole an eager glance round the kitchen, and then let her eyes rest in mingled timidity and awe upon Old Scrag.

Old Scrag, who rarely saw any of the villagers from Hollyss, and whose memory was failing him, blinked at the girl with that dim satisfaction which even an old man can feel at the sight of a beautiful woman, without in the least knowing who she was.

‘Who is yon lass, Mattie?’ said he feebly, poking in her direction with his stick. ‘Give me my glasses.’

‘Ay, Scrag! Dunnot!’ said Mrs. Greenhough hastily. ‘Sit down, Miss Morrison. It’s a dark cold evening for yo to be out.’

‘Pretty lasses should na wander their lone at dark. Hoo’s a witch,’ growled the old man, feeling vaguely on the table for his glasses, and still staring.

‘*Don’t* mind him,’ implored Mrs. Greenhough, her sensitive face flushing painfully;

‘ we are glad to see yo, and thank yo for calling.’

Marjorie set her basket down upon the table, smiled, and going towards Old Scrag, took up the spectacle-case and knelt down by his side.

‘ Shall I get your glasses out for you ? Here they are.’

‘ Aye; if yo can do’t ’bout breaking them.’

Old Scrag watched with silent interest while she got them out and handed them to him. Then he deliberately put them on, and looked well at the beautiful face before him.

‘ Farmer Morrison’s daughter, o’ Cockshuthey. Aye ! I know her. A proud minx.’

He had turned back to the fire, and was reflecting. He appeared to have forgotten Marjorie’s immediate presence ; but something in the beautiful young face had stirred unusual memories ; his fine old countenance wrinkled and puckered into something that was more a softened light than a smile.

‘When I was young,’ said he suddenly, ‘there were a lass called Mollie Browster. Ay! Hoo’d a bonnie eye. I danced wi’ her at Milltown Wakes. A bonnie eye and a straight ankle had Mollie.’

‘Scrag!’ exclaimed Mrs. Greenhough, amazed and uneasy at these recollections.

‘Aye. Mollie, hoo trimmed me my cap for the morris-dance. It were a fine do. Hast seen a morris-dance? I took Jack Buckley aside at-after, and just broke my new ash-staff over him. Jack, he’d tried to kiss Mollie Browster. He were a lout, were Jack Buckley. But Mollie, hoo wed him i’ th’ end. Aye, hoo did.’

‘I niver knew him talk like this afore,’ whispered Mrs. Greenhough anxiously, leaning over the table; ‘yo’ll excuse him.’

‘See!’ said Marjorie, gently touching his arm; ‘I brought you a pair of new warm stockings; I knitted them myself.’

‘Hast made the heels double?’ said Old Scrag severely. ‘Our Mattie, she always knits ’em double for me.’

‘Yes, I generally do the same.’

‘I doubt they’re too short i’ th’ leg.’

‘No. I think they’re right.’

‘Now, I dunnot like harsh wool.’

‘But I think the wool is soft. Feel it.’

‘H’m. Aye. It is na bad. Aye. I reckon they’ll do.’

Having thus satisfied himself that the gift was to his mind, Old Scrag, without further words, abstracted his attention and turned again to the fire.

Marjorie rose from her knees, and turning to Mrs. Greenhough, who had been watching in speechless astonishment, said :

‘Mrs. Greenhough, I have come to bring your son the stockings he ordered from me.’

‘Ay ! I’ll call him. He niver told me where he got his stockings from.’

But there was no occasion to call Abel. By degrees the unusual voices in the kitchen penetrated through his absorbed thoughts ; then they arrested his attention ; then they aroused his curiosity ; then they brought him downstairs. He stood now with the handle

of the door in his hand, and the moment his gaze fell upon Marjorie his eye flashed and his cheek crimsoned.

Marjorie, on her part, turned towards him without looking up, blushing to her very finger-tips.

‘Mr. Greenhough, I brought you the stockings,’ faltered she.


‘Thank you,’ said Abel, coming forward dreamily. Then he stood gazing at the stockings in a dazed sort of way, as though he had never seen such things before.

Marjorie hesitated for a second or two, cast one forlorn glance at him, and began slowly to take up her basket.

Mrs. Greenhough, plucking her son by his sleeve, whispered hastily :

‘Abe, lad ! what art starin’ at ? Pay her, and find thee manners.’

Thus conjured, Abel started and thrust his hand into his pocket, and as his eyes met Marjorie’s, an irrepressible smile trembled on his lips. He held the silver in a little heap between his finger and thumb, and dropped



it into her open palm. But it is perhaps absolutely impossible for two who are united by the closest intimacy to act the part of mere acquaintances to one another. The undefinable something had not escaped the keen eyes of the mother, nor the quivering smile, nor the answering droop of Marjorie's lids.

'Of course I will go back home with you,' said Abel, snatching his warm peajacket and cap from the hook. And then they went out together, and the door closed behind them.

Old Scrag's eyes were still on the fire, and he was lost in his own memories; but Mrs. Greenhough went down suddenly on the floor before him when they were alone, and clasped his knees.

'Scrag,' she cried in great emotion, 'yon lass loves our Abel.'

Meanwhile the two were walking slowly away in the snow.

'Oh, Abel!' exclaimed Marjorie, as soon as they were out of hearing, 'I thought you never would understand! And what *will* you say to me? Have I done wrong?'



For answer he flung his arm round her and drew her to his side.

‘You’re not angry?’

Abel stopped short and leaned against the wall for the better convenience of his embrace.

‘I wanted to send you a message by Lavvy,’ said Marjorie, reaching up to his face with her arms about his neck; ‘but Lavvy, you know, is so busy this week at the Hall with the company they’ve got. And the days were slipping by, and our time for meeting wasn’t to come yet; and I’d promised the Squire something, and yet I cannot bear to do it without telling you.’

‘And so thou’s come and witched the heart out of Old Scrag? But what is it, lass?’

‘Derrick is going away, Abel.’

‘Well, he’s always off somewhere. That’s nothing new.’

‘Yes, but he comes back again. This time he is going to remain away. And I am to see him only once again, and that not in private.’

‘ Ah ! I see. But, Marjorie, I hope he said nothing to thee.’

‘ There was nothing to pain me. He has always been the same from beginning to end. But Abe—yes ; it is because of me he is leaving ; I know it. I am very sad and sorry ; yet oh ! so relieved.’

‘ I’m sorry for him too,’ said Abel, jealously pressing her closer ; ‘ and yet my heart has been sore many a time when I’ve seen the lights in your parlour and knew he was sitting near you, while I was shut out in the cold, and must bide my time for a stolen moment.’

‘ Oh, Abe, you are never in the cold ! Are you not warm in my heart always—always—my own husband ?’

‘ I saw him come out on Christmas Eve. I’m often round like some one wild, trying to catch a glimpse of your shadow on the blind. I could have given a great cry when I saw him come from your door, I was so mad and hungry for a sight of you, and he’d had you all the evening.’

‘ Thou would na have envied him hadst seen


him,' answered Marjorie, lapsing with her soft caressing tones into the dialect which Derrick had taught her to discard. 'Oh, Abe! remember his goodness to me. What could I ha' done without him in the beginning? And dunnot, lad, tell me too much o' thy pain; it makes my own burden too sore to bear. Thou munna be jealous.. Oh! it wounds me.'

'It is not jealousy I feel exactly. But thou knows what cause I have to tremble about thee. I want thee safe in my own cot; I want my right in thee.'

'And dost think it's so over-easy for me? Dost think I never weary and fair faint with longing for our little home?'

'When will it end?'

'Be patient a bit, Abe, and then. It can't be long before I acknowledge thy right wi' me. I should ha' come to thee long since had na it been for John. But could I strike again at my poor old feyther's heart? Didst thou not say thysel, we mun wait? Oh! thou promised.'



‘Lass, thou must na think too much o’ my wild words. I would na that thy heart were tarnished wi’ the feeling o’ wrong-doing for the warld. I will not urge thee against thy conscience—no, not though the law itsel, as is generally against me, ‘ud be o’ my side here. Bide with them,’ he added with his voice trembling, ‘so long as thou feels it right.’

‘It’s thee, Abe, as has set up the standard o’ duty for me I’m thinking o’ somehows, though it goes against thysel,’ said Marjorie timidly.

‘Did I? Well, thou’ll not try me too long wilt, Marjorie?’

‘No, Abe. Thou’rt first wi’ me, though thou does na see it. I shall know when I may go.’

‘If I only had a farm! It ‘ud make a vast o’ difference. I’d all but got the one that fell vacant i’ Moorfield; but Squire Ferrers, he soon put an end to’t when he found t’ steward were letting it to *me*. Then I offered for one t’ other side o’ Milltown, and ivery-thing were arranged, when suddenly, ‘bout a

word o' explanation, it were all off. And I knew that it was all because of the story about the gaol. It hangs over me like the pest.'

'Art sorry thou did it, Abe?' asked Marjorie softly.

The man was silent for a second or two; then he sighed deeply.

'No, Marjorie. Not in my heart of hearts. But there's so much that lies on the top before you can reach that. And I doubt whether I'd counted the cost; one never does, I suppose. I had not thought that it would keep you and me apart in this sort o' way, and make the people cut me worse than before. These things make me cry out at times. Yet you're right; I would not undo it if I could.'

'I shall be proud of the day when I tell everyone that I'm thy wife, Abel.'

'Yes?'

'I do wish the sort of weary falseness silence makes were over.'

'Aye. I wish the tangle were o'

Thou'd have done best t' have taken the Squire and left me.'

He passed his hand fondly over her hair, and sighed.

'Should I? Well, I'll tell thee the very first moment *I* think that.'

'Now say what it is he wanted you to do.'

Marjorie, slipping her hand in his arm, related as they walked on what had passed between herself and Derrick on Christmas Eve.

'Well, I don't like it—that's flat,' said Abel, when she had finished.

'I must do it, however,' said she firmly; 'I owe him something, you know.'

'I'd scarce thought it of him. He should not have asked thee.'

Marjorie sighed.

'Are you vexed, Abel?'

'Not with thee. I am with him.'

'He can't look at it as you do, for he does not even guess that it is you I love—still less the truth.'

‘That’s just it. If he knew thou wert my wife, he wouldn’t have dreamed of asking thee.’

‘Oh, Abel,’ said Marjorie wearily, ‘I am tired, too. Thou dost na know how I fair long for the time when I may just think o’ my single duty to thee, and not strive any more to lead a double kind o’ life.’

‘I’m ready, dear Marjorie, any moment as thou’ll say thou’ll come. I know of a cot we can have.’

‘Not yet. *Don’t*, Abel.’

‘Well, I’ll be patient,’ said he; ‘haven’t I been patient long enough?’

‘Come and meet me when it’s over. It is only to stand five minutes, he said, dressed in a fine dress, and then it’ll be done. I could not refuse his last request. But, oh! I was glad when he said he was going. It’ll be simpler—surely it will be simpler afterwards.’

‘I make no doubt it will be easier, lassie; but still, we can’t go on this way for ever. You see this is just the same kind o’ thing

that happened before, and made us determine to risk everything and get married.'

'Oh no, Abel! *This* is surely not like *that*.'

'In a measure it is. It is a position in which the Squire would not have put you had he known you were a wife. Just as Mr. Howell in the past would never have terrified you by his ravings, or spoken at all, had he known at the time that you were engaged to be married. Our simply having got wed has been no protection to you, seeing how secret we are keeping it.'

'Indeed it has, Abel. I've been a different woman since. I have a strength and patience and courage such as I cannot describe. When I press my ring and marriage lines against my breast, I am so strong that nothing seems too hard. I remember that thou's made me thy wife; I know I'm Marjorie Greenhough; and I live in the knowledge of that fact, whether others know it or not. It *does* protect me. I'm not afraid of Mr. Howell now.'

'You've never met him since?'



‘No. I naturally avoid any place where I might meet him.’

‘Man alive! How the fellow must have raved!’

‘It was something terrible. It was shocking. A minister of God to make such a horrible turmoil over one poor woman.’

‘Yes,’ said Abel, laughing mischievously, ‘it is strange, when he has all the angels and archangels to choose from.’

‘Now, Abel,’ said Marjorie, withdrawing her arm from his, ‘these are the wicked things that really hurt me. I *will* not have you sneer at his religion—and mine.’

The husband caught his wife to his breast with a low, soft, joyous laugh.

‘Thou’s got to put up with a something, thou knows. Thou’s wed Old Scrag’s nephew; taken him “for better and worse.” Thou’ll find he has a queer vein in him—a touch o’ Old Scrag himself, maybe—a deal o’ the “worse.”’

‘We’ll see what can be done t’ mend him then, when we’ve gotten us cot and set up

wi' us housekeeping,' said the wife, pushing her husband's cap back so as to run her fingers through his hair. 'Abel, I'm sorry and uneasy that I've promised to do aught that thou does na approve on.'

'Well, it's for the Squire; and I don't know that I'd have had thee refuse. He got me locked up once, it is true, but I bear him no manner of grudge personally. I shall set myself against him and his class all my life, no doubt. But as far as his private character goes, I think he's behaved from beginning to end in the rare spirit of a true gentleman. I knocked him down once; but that was as a Squire; as a man, I'd like to shake hands with him now, for the sake of his goodness to thee. On the whole, I'm rather pleased to trust thee to his good feeling. But I hope Howell won't be there. What a mad fancy of Devonporte's to want to play that runaway scene over again!'

'I took it that he had something in his mind about recognising his kin in spite of the difference of class.'

‘He’s getting on, then, if he has.’

‘Well, I may go?’

‘Yes. And I’ll wait about to take you home. And, Marjorie!’

‘Yes.’

‘Our secret’s all but out to my mother—that I’m sure of, after your visit. She’ll work it out of me; you know what women are.’

‘Thou soft lad!’

‘Well, it suits me that she should. My Aunt Ann stays the Wednesday evening service at Howell’s chapel with amazing regularity. Thou can slip down to Ouzel Hole, and we shall be ready for thee. Thou *must* come.’

‘Oh, Abe! How masterful thou art! Good-night, my own, own lad. Abe!’

‘Aye?’

‘Dost know that Old Scrag once had a Mollie Browster?’

‘Thou dost na say!’



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE TABLEAUX AT THE HALL.

‘What heart can think, or tongue express  
The harm that groweth of idleness?’

HEYWOOD.

**D**ERRICK had no idea that he had played the part of Mephistopheles to Saul Howell. His own life—even in the midst of trial, bright, sweet, consistent, not over-deep in its capacity of experience, yet in its quick responsiveness to generous and unselfish instincts leading to ‘fine issues’—this bright life of his was unconsciously stirring the most tragic elements in the stronger characters with which it came in contact.

The relations between himself and Saul

were stranger than either conceived ; Derrick had never lost that admiration which had crept into his heart on the first occasion of their familiarity ; he believed in Howell completely—for him he was unchanged ; it was his love for that which was better than himself that had bound him to Saul in the beginning, and it continued to be the foundation of his affection. Saul loved Derrick also ; yet his friendship had in it from the beginning the flaw of suspicion. It was impossible for a man of his bias to conceive that one who made no pretence of cutting out for himself a rigorous path of duty, who indeed seemed to be perpetually seeking new change and delight, was being trained by the unsought discipline of heaven to ‘endure hardness.’ And so, while he loved him, he vaguely credited him with equivocal possibilities that did not, in reality, lie within his character.

Saul himself had a tendency towards wreck—the possibility to which one is always liable whose temperament inclines towards extremes,

and who will be either greatly good or greatly evil. Long since he had forsaken his excessive religious enthusiasm, and since then the powers and resources of his dangerous nature had gradually unfolded and developed themselves as they would. Derrick, unconsciously a tempter, had introduced his friend to other houses besides his own, and Saul's personality continued to be an attraction to the brilliant high-bred society he met there. The refined people, the gracious surroundings, were alluring to all that was sensuous in his character; and in other ways his popularity had smoothed away some of the uglinesses of his former position; it became quite the fashion for aristocratic persons to drive over to the little chapel at Milltown to hear the great preacher, so that the savourless Sundays began to smack of the week's brilliant dissipation.

Over the misery in which we last saw him, a certain callousness and indifference had crept; he had succeeded in holding down by the throat the inconvenient conviction of

his own atheism, together with the whisper that his life was a perpetual lie; in like manner did he sustain, by mere power of will, the shocks that occasionally came to him by the passing over his mind of an indefinable yet awful dread—a dread which had the force of a presentiment, and which indeed seemed to beckon to him with the compelling authority of a destiny.

About Marjorie he had continued for long to hope, with a blindness born of the intensity of his passion. A year and a half ago, some six weeks before John Morrison's disappearance from Cockshuthey, the crisis of his love had approached. He had found an opportunity of speaking to her; but his declaration was met by simple astonishment, and even by a touch of angry shame. And then, when the hopelessness of his love became clear to him, his enforced self-restraint snapped suddenly asunder; he broke out into expressions of anguish and despair and unbridled extravagance of passion, which struck upon the girl's ear as alike blas-

phemous to God and insulting to herself. Finally, she had fled from him in horror and alarm.

The immediate result of this outrage from so unexpected a quarter was to induce a resolution from Abel to make Marjorie at once his wife, so that he might take her under his own protection. Marjorie, who was already much worn by the uneasiness and distress which Derrick's presence caused her, had been terrified by Saul's stormy declaration, and thankfully yielded to the hope of peace and happiness in a union with the man she loved.

They had been married unknown to any for many months. The secrecy with which they had covered the event was entirely an afterthought, and had been caused by the complication which John's desertion had brought about. This had happened immediately after the marriage. And Marjorie felt, for the moment, that her duty to her parents was more sacred and imperative even than that to her husband. To inform her father of what she had done, would have been to bring



another trouble upon him. She could not bear to withdraw from the house directly after John; and she would only be permitted to remain and help them in their sorrow by concealing the fact that she had taken Abel's name. The blow of John's desertion had affected them more even than she imagined, so that week by week and month by month she lingered in the farm, consoling and assisting them by every means in her power.

To Saul, the result of his disillusion was disastrous in the extreme. He no longer cared to keep up to himself the appearance of consistency; he flung open the doors of his mind to anything that chose to enter; and that which had hovered dimly without came in now and established itself. But he neither left Milltown nor resigned his ministry there.

During the Christmas and New-Year festivities which the Squire had arranged at the Hall, Saul was continually present. It was a great interest to him to meet Zachary Pearse there, and to see how he bore the weight of prosperity and fame which had so suddenly

fallen upon him ; for Howell, in the midst of the complications of his own life, preserved that humane and compassionate sympathy towards others which had always strongly characterized him. He, besides Derrick, was the only one of the assembly who knew of the sculptor's humble origin.

Zachary meanwhile was enjoying himself hugely. Too modest for anything like self-assertion, he escaped by this simple trait many chances of awkwardness ; then beauty and grace were more natural to his ideas than the reverse, so that he could not feel utterly out of his element at Hollyss. If he made any mistake in behaviour or etiquette, it was easy for those who saw it to set it down to the eccentricity and absent-mindedness that are consistent with genius ; but Zach did not greatly err in the narrow ways of society. Having all his life, until of late, struggled against odds, he had learnt the valuable power of silence and of waiting upon events—both of excellent use in surroundings to which one is unaccustomed.

Miss Troisages thought him perfect, and even confided to herself that she was inclined to throw the Major over and win the sculptor in real earnest. This was, perhaps, a sacrifice in order to secure the satisfaction of out-manceuvring Miss Heurtley, who nightly played Cleopatra in a different dress at Zachary and expended her days in devising costumes. But Zachary kept singularly free from mischief, and delighted Derrick, after a close siege, by showing him sketches which he had made from memory of Miss Heurtley's arms and Miss Troisages' hair, and assuring him that they would be of use in modelling the group of Sabine women in bas-relief upon which he was at present at work.

The Major, meanwhile, was being rapidly reduced to submission and an offer, and probably enjoyed his Christmas as little as anyone at Hollyss.

Of all the amusements which Derrick had provided for his guests, the evening of the tableaux was to be the most important and interesting. The house on that day w

crowded with people, every available nook being utilized in stowing away the guests and the extra servants. Besides those in the Hall, brilliant party were invited to be present, from the numerous houses around ; and after the tableaux, the evening was to be concluded by a dance in the ball-room. In the afternoon there was to be skating upon the pond in the park, for those who cared for the exercise.

From this last amusement Saul had excused himself. He had suffered all the morning from a feeling of oppression which he could not shake off, and which the lively scenes and constant voices around him seemed only to increase. He believed it was the result of late hours on the evening before, and the strain of a hard argument in the smoking-room in which he and others had indulged immediately before going to bed ; a quiet stroll in the open air alone would no doubt set him right and prepare him for the events of the evening. In order to secure this, he waited until he heard Derrick and his guests departing for the pond, and then quietly


let himself out by a side-door and turned towards an unfrequented part of the garden.

The snow still lay thickly upon the ground, upon the branches, the bushes, and the flower-beds. It was heaped upon each side of the paths he trod, and as the day was bright in frost and sunshine, everything glittered with an intense brilliancy. Saul stood still for a moment and looked upon the scene. It was in effect very much the same as that on which Derrick had gazed in his boyish discontent upon the first day of his arrival at home. But now the sweeps of lawn were covered with a white sheet, and on every point where the sunbeams fell were diamond-like scintillations. The distance lay in the same hard brilliancy, and the sun shone in the cloudless blue with a broad unlidded glare. Involuntarily Saul raised his hand and covered his eyes and brow, turning away with a sensation of increased discomfort which yet did not amount to pain. Then he walked towards the eastern side of the house, and passed beneath the shade of the stone-terrace. Over

and over this path did he tread, and up and down, and up and down, for the space of an hour, looking now and again to the window opening upon the terrace, and now and again to the dark slope of the garden. This side of the house was as dull and gloomy as the western had been brilliant; for not only did it lie in complete shade, it was also overgrown with trees and shrubs, and had been less cultivated than any other part of the grounds. But it suited Saul. He fancied that his feeling of inward disturbance was passing away, and giving place to an agreeable elasticity of spirits. His thoughts turned idly to some of the minor events of the past few days, to such lively unimportant incidents as filled his mind with a pleasurable sense of the ease and luxury of life.

Thus he continued his stroll for some time; when suddenly, pausing in his walk, he looked down the garden in the direction of a summer-house which, overgrown with ivy, had so far remained amongst the shadowy paths undistinguished by him.

No one had called ; nothing had happened ; but an electric sense of expectation seized him. He turned and, impelled by impulse, walked quickly in the direction of the harbour, and sat down upon the bench. Here he remained with the same strange thrill running through him : his heart beat, and he had the difficulty in breathing regularly which people have who are going through some intense excitement or strain. So impressed was he with the idea that something was about to happen, that he kept glancing round from his place of refuge at the garden and the house in the expectation of finding some clue to his own mysterious excitement. Then an incoherent state followed. The tangible objects upon which he had been gazing faded from him, and with his wide-open eyes he seemed to be staring at chaotic darkness. His hands, meanwhile, had involuntarily thrust themselves out, and now grasped the table in front of him strongly. Saul made an effort of will to rouse himself ; he was conscious of where he was ; his mind appeared to be



clear and collected, but he found that his power was gone. The sense of excitement and expectation increased, and then out of the darkness at which he was looking swept the nameless shapeless Shadow that had come to him in lesser form before. The man writhed, and groaned, and shrank back in horror, but it was upon him and enveloped him. And then it passed away and was gone. But it left him trembling like a weak woman, lying back in his seat exhausted, with the perspiration pouring down his face, and for the moment incapable of rising or speaking.

As he sat thus, the welcome sound of ordinary voices close by broke on his ear.

‘This is the place,’ he heard Derrick saying.

‘And that the window, I suppose,’ replied Zachary.

And then the two stepped in front of the harbour and showed themselves as two comfortable specimens of manhood, clothed in top-coats and fur caps, and with skates in their



hands. And yet Saul, as he looked up piteously and eagerly at their faces, was certain that he saw in both a reflection of his own incomprehensible excitement.

‘Halloa, Howell!’

‘What is the matter?’ asked Saul involuntarily.

‘Nothing,’ replied Derrick, stealing however a glance at Zachary, who responded by instantly averting his eyes from Howell’s gaze.

‘There is something,’ said Saul dreamily.  
‘I have had——’

‘What is it, old fellow? Are you ill?’

‘Not ill. No. I have had a strange mental impression. Is this place haunted?’

‘Why it’s broad daylight!’ responded Derrick, colouring, however, and looking vexed.

‘There can be night in the mind,’ said Saul, partly to himself.

‘Look here,’ said Derrick, with a short laugh, ‘you have been sitting in a damp hole until you have caught the ague or something. Come out into the sun.’

---

‘Tell me if the place is haunted,’ pressed Saul.

‘It is as much haunted as places ever are. This is called Dame Marjorie’s garden, and the story runs that she still comes to sit in the arbour. You can believe it or not, as you choose ; she has been dead a hundred and fifty years. And ghosts only come at midnight.’

‘Marjorie!’ echoed Howell vaguely.

‘Yes ; it is an uncommon name. Spelt like that, I only know of it as belonging to members of my family.’

Saul had risen by this time and was walking away from the place between his two friends. Yet he was by no means himself. When he heard Derrick say that Marjorie was a name belonging to his own family, he merely supposed him to have forgotten the existence of Marjorie Morrison. For the moment his own sensations were supreme with him, and he heard and saw the things around him still as one in a dream. When they came to the corner of the house, he

paused before leaving the eastern side, and looked back.

‘Devonporte,’ he said, ‘I do not believe in the supernatural. I think manifestations from the spiritual world to be a humbugging list of delusions. But I have gone through all the horror supposed to be connected with such things during the last hour.’

‘Have you seen anything?’ asked Derrick, with his eyes on the ground.

‘Nothing.’

‘Then you have been ill, I fear, Howell.’

‘I have not been ill. What I felt then, I have felt in a lesser form before.’

‘You are tired—exhausted.’

‘Perhaps so.’

And with a sudden effort, Howell shook himself and stepped forward with his old collected air of decision, and Derrick and Zachary felt that he had dismissed the subject.

But during the remainder of the day, the air seemed everywhere charged with a subtle excitement. When tableaux are to be acted,

a certain amount of mystery usually pervades the house ; and on this occasion there was a double secret—one hidden even from the principal actors themselves. Miss Heurtley consoled her vanity by pretending to an amount of knowledge which she certainly did not possess, and by whispering hints to Miss Courtiss with a view to stabbing the already pained heart of that lady. Miss Troisages had a costume especially designed for her by Zachary, and was concealing this important fact (she had confided it to the despairing Major) in order to discharge it upon Miss Heurtley at the proper moment. Zachary himself was grave and thoughtful, and more than ordinarily absent-minded. Derrick was silent and excited by turns ; Saul alone was genial and ordinary in manner.


And at last the absorbing moment arrived ; the tableaux were to begin. Let the reader picture to himself the triumphs and agitations and despondencies of the three belles, the grace, the beauty, and the vanity, as best he

may ; we must occupy ourselves solely with Zachary and Saul.

By some curious fate they had seated themselves together. Tableau after tableau had passed with satisfactory variations on the admiring theme. Then there was an interval. During this short space of time the actors who had been playing before rustled into the room at the back of the spectators ; they were in costume, and, while receiving the congratulations of their friends, assured them that something still was to be performed which would be as much a surprise to them as to the rest. Zachary, with folded arms, waited in silence ; Saul, genial and merry, was talking to Miss Heurtley over his shoulder.

And then a low weird music began from somewhere at the back of the scene, and the curtain slowly drew up—only, however, to disclose a second one.

Howell's eyes had a moment before been fully occupied in lazily contemplating Miss Heurtley, who leaned towards him over the



back of his chair. She was playing at Zachary in reality, but the minister was also game, and, as the sculptor for the moment seemed lost in thought, it was sufficient occupation to open the sleepy innocence of her brown eyes on Saul, and allow him the pleasure of looking full into them as long as he chose. But the curtain was up now; Miss Heurtley raised her eyebrows, and Howell turned slowly round. Scarcely, however, had his glance fallen upon the curtain than his face changed, a grey shadow crept over it, and his fingers closed over the support upon which they had been lightly resting a moment before. Upon the curtain was painted a part of the eastern side of Hollyss Hall—the window opening upon the stone terrace; and above, in a blaze of light, hung the portrait of a beautiful woman. She wore a magnificent costume of a century ago, but the face was to all appearance Marjorie Morrison's, and round it, in illumination, were the words 'Dame Marjorie Devonporte.'

‘It is coming!’ murmured Saul unconsciously to himself.

To the same music the second curtain now drew up, the portrait being left, however, fully displayed.

The raising of the curtain this time revealed an apartment luxuriously furnished in the style of two centuries past; it was dimly lighted, and the window was flung open, disclosing a stone terrace, some garden shrubs, and darkness beyond. Just within the room, or rather in the act of stepping over the threshold of the window, was a man clothed as a common labourer, in the gaiters and smock and slouched cap which were worn a hundred years ago. But the light was thrown strongly upon his face; it was bent, with an expression of entreaty, over that of a lady who stood beside him, and whose hands he clasped with one of his own, whilst with the other he pointed to the window. The lady was dressed in a splendid costume of the last century; it was in every respect precisely the same as that of the portrait hanging above her; her

attitude was taken in the moment of yielding, and her exquisite face, which was also strongly illuminated, was lifted with an expression of rapt love to that of the man.

When the living picture was thus revealed to the spectators, a moment of silence followed; and then came murmurs of admiration and wonder, and whispered inquiries as to who the lady could be who bore so strong a resemblance to the portrait.

And when the curtain fell again, there was a burst of applause such as had not been given to any other of the pictures.

In the midst of this, Zachary, with his arms folded, sat motionless. He could take no part in the applause. He had seen her again, and she was infinitely lovelier than before; to have gazed at her for five minutes was sufficient for him; he had no other hopes connected with her; he had nothing but his own faithfulness.

Saul, meanwhile, had risen, and had silently left the room.

It was in vain that the spectators called




for a re-appearance. The curtain did not lift again, and after about ten minutes of confused cries, laughter and talk, Derrick came suddenly into their midst, dressed in ordinary evening costume, and begged them to adjourn to the ball-room. He talked gaily with all, and parried the innumerable questions that were showered upon him; finally he led the way with Miss Courtiss upon his arm. But he was pale, and his eyes shone with subdued excitement.

Saul had again sought the relief of open air. It would have been pitch-dark outside but that the whiteness of the snow made a faint glimmer. The air was keen and cold; the sky dull and clouded. He strode up and down the garden path for fully half an hour before any noise disturbed the silence. His hands were clasped behind him and his head lifted; sharp though the night wind was, he did not feel it; the whole of himself, mind and body, was absorbed in striving to fight down his own excitement and to force himself, for the evening at least, into some show of

calm. Into the full meaning of the tableau he dared not now inquire; but when he thought of it—of Derrick holding her hands in his sight for five long minutes—the bite as of a snake was at his heart.

Suddenly there floated from the ball-room the sensuous sound of dreamy waltz music; a hand threw up one of the windows, and a stream of light flowed out across the path and lawn; over it flitted, at swift intervals, the whirling shadows of the dancers.

Saul stood still, gazing at the place; it was one of those sudden changes of effects that act as a momentary stimulus to thought; and as he looked and listened, there flashed upon him a full comprehension of the futile wickedness and falseness of his position. He belonged in no real sense to the world of pleasure-seekers to whom he had joined himself; whether he would or not, he was attuned to greater heights or greater depths, and carried in himself the fatal key to his own destiny. And had he not already chosen what his part should be by the tremendous




lie he was practising? He knew himself as an atheist, and he stood before the world as a minister of God.

This flash of self-knowledge had not the effect of startling Saul. There was no repetition of the afternoon's presentiment: rather, his mind felt calmed and cleared. His head was bent now, and with his hands still lightly crossed behind him, he quietly strolled onward. Nor had he any sense of self-horror; on the contrary, he had an invigorating feeling of decision and resolve. It was for the sake of a beautiful woman that he had risked his integrity. He had retained his position at Milltown because he could not and would not forsake her neighbourhood. And, having gone so far, should he tamely retreat on his steps, or consent to lose her without a struggle?

Saul paused for a moment in his walk, and raising his hand, made with it a mute but eloquent gesture.

Then he resumed his quiet stroll. His attention was, however, attracted by a figure



which, issuing from the eastern side of the house, turned in his direction. It was with no other sense than that of unconscious curiosity that he paused to watch ; but as the figure approached and passed him, he recognised Marjorie Morrison. A moment later he was an unseen witness of the meeting between herself and her husband. But it was too dark to distinguish objects unless close to them ; and Saul saw nothing clearly but that a tall man had met the girl, and had folded her unreprieved in his embrace.

After what he had seen in the tableau, he had no shadow of a doubt that the man was Derrick Devonporte.



## CHAPTER V.

### MISUNDERSTANDING.

'To be wroth with one we love  
Doth work like madness in the brain.'

COLERIDGE.

**T**HE days that followed were chaos to Saul. That night he did not return to the house, but made the best of his way home to Milltown. The next morning, however, he sought Derrick.

The Squire was, he found, as grave and thoughtful as the evening before he had been gay and excited. Some of the guests, indeed most of them, were in the act of departing from Hollyss, and the place was more or less in confusion. Miss Troisages had become engaged to the Major during the dance on the

previous night, and was much occupied with him in a private sitting-room. Zachary had seized the opportunity of the general break-up to go down to the village to see some of his old friends.

His father, gentle William Pearse, had passed suddenly away during his absence in Rome, and his mother had left the village. But Zachary would see the cottage again, and recall more vividly the image of the simple old man, whose harmless life had been untarnished by one bitter impatient word, and whose humble childlike spirit left behind the fragrance of a beautiful memory in the hearts of all who knew him.

And Zachary would call, too, upon old Scrag and Abel Greenhough, and sit with his friend in the long bedroom at Ouzel Hole, where so many happy hours of his early life had been spent. Cockshuthey only would he avoid.

Lavinia Pearse had long ago been taken by the Squire from her severe work at the mill, and placed in an easy position in his own house. And here the brother and sister had

contrived many interviews during Zachary's stay, Lavinia being far too proud of his rapid rise to allow him to mar it by acknowledging her in public, although he was quite willing to do so.

Saul, therefore, as soon as the hurry of adieux and departures was over, when the last wave of the hand of Miss Heurtley had been expended upon the air, and the last stormy glance of Miss Courtiss's eyes had fallen upon the unconscious and immovable Squire—Saul had ample opportunity of conversing in private with his friend.

'*That's over!*' exclaimed Derrick, when the hall-door finally closed upon the last batch of leave-takers. 'Come along, Howell. What a blessing that you have turned up! I meant to have seen you somehow this morning. You vanished last night!'

'I was not well.'

'No more ghosts, I trust,' said the Squire, smiling. 'What do you say to billiards?'

'Oh yes. That or anything.'

They went to the billiard-room, and

Derrick, taking up a cue, vaguely played a ball, and then threw it down.

‘I’m not in the humour,’ said he, with another sudden smile, which yet had the effect of sadness, upon his face. ‘Nor are you.’

‘Well; perhaps not.’

Derrick, without another word, drew a couple of armchairs to the fire, beckoned Saul to one of them, and took the other himself. And then he looked at his friend in the simplicity of his own perfect trust.

The suspicion and envy which had haunted Howell’s mind dimly like ghosts ever since he first met Derrick returning to Hollyss, were now as evil spirits that had entered in and taken possession. And yet it was the old habit of affection which prevented him from returning the Squire’s gaze, and which made him notice, against his will, what a noble and sweet physiognomy was turned upon him. There was not a sign in Saul’s manner of the agitation through which he had passed. He had manly force enough to enable him to master the disturbing effects of conscience,



or anything else that would have interfered with his resolution and his plans. With his iron will it was not difficult to act his part, and suppress any self-betrayals. Saul was no weak half-hearted hypocrite who, in order to deceive others or commit crime, must begin by whitewashing the event, and deceiving himself first. He entered upon his course of wickedness strongly, as he had upon that of the saint. And as to the rest, it would be by no means hard for him to keep up his accepted character, and play the high priest of goodness to his friends. Give the man the prestige of a good name, and he will be able to carry on years of departure from it without detection, in the very midst of his circle. And Saul had more than a good name: by many he was considered a saint and a hero.

On this occasion, therefore, it was not a failure of will that prevented him from meeting his friend's gaze; it was the fear of the weakness caused by his own strong affection for Derrick.

‘Howell!’



‘Well.’

‘I have made a mess of my life,’ began Derrick suddenly. ‘I am going away.’

‘Ah!’ said Saul; ‘that surprises me.’

‘Does it?’

‘Certainly. If you had asked my opinion as to what you were going to do next, I should have said—marry and settle down.’

Derrick clasped his hands behind his head, as was his habit, tilted his chair, and laughed a short dry laugh.

‘Marry? No. There is nothing further from my thoughts.’

‘And yet you have every inducement.’

‘All except inclination.’

Saul’s mouth was parched, and at this moment he found it convenient to pass his fingers through his thick fair hair.

‘There were plenty of lovely women to choose from last night.’

‘Oh, loads! For anything I cared they might each and all have been at the North Pole instead of in my house.’

‘All?’

‘Come, Howell! The subject of marriage is distasteful to me. I have somehow dropped into speaking disrespectfully of a number of ladies whom I am sure I heartily esteem and admire, and have also managed to assume that they were all pleasantly inclined to me—which is a hateful piece of coxcombry I did not seriously intend. Let us leave the subject of women. It is enough for a man to discover that he loves where he cannot marry.’

Derrick’s face was grave and sad, and his eyes wandered slowly over the ceiling.

To Saul the last words were tantamount to a confession.

‘And you are going away?’

‘Yes. There come moments in a fellow’s life when the best thing he can do is to cut and run. Has it ever occurred to you that to be born to a great inheritance and a surprising destiny like mine is a great misfortune? I am inclined to think at times that Greenhough has been right all along in his polite

insinuations that I am only a cumberer of the ground. There must be work somewhere—real hard toiling work—that even a white-handed squire may do. I should like to do something that would win me Greenhough's respect.'

'You harp on him. I thought you were sworn foes, and dealt out to each other an equal measure of contempt. Have you seen him lately?'


'I constantly see him. Never to much good, though. I hate the fellow, and yet I ache to win his good opinion. It is the most extraordinary fatality, for I cannot remember ever caring twopence about any other man's. *He* takes no pains to win mine! And yet he has it. How the man can handle his plough, or his sickle, or his scythe, or any mortal instrument he takes up! It is a picture to see him throwing the seed. And then, if you come to talk to him on any subject, he has it all at his finger-ends; and his head is far clearer and better stocked than mine is, with all my college education. I believe we addle

ourselves by cram. Greenhough is real all through.'

'You seem to have made friends with him in spite of the prison episode.'

'No, I have not !' said Derrick emphatically. And then he laughed again his short dry laugh. 'The first time I saw him after that, I felt as shy and wretched as a girl. But Greenhough came up to me and talked over farming affairs as though nothing had happened—as unabashed and independent as though he had *not*—beaten me hollow. And when I tried to take a grand air and utter a few patronizing and instructive phrases, he turned on me with a twinkle of amusement in his abominable eyes, and said: "You just acted up to your lights, and did what you thought best ; and I did the same." You've no idea what farthing dips my "lights" seemed when shown up in this cool way. If he had only cursed me, or "heaved a brick" !'

'I have not seen Greenhough since I visited him in prison. Now that old Pearse is dead



I never come across the Hollyss or Moorfield villagers.'

'Don't you? It has been an annoyance to me—I may say a real trouble—to find that Greenhough has suffered far more through the prison episode than I intended. He wants a farm, it appears, and no one will let to him; then they tell me that the villagers cut him worse than ever because of it. It is like the base herd to reap the benefit of his action, and turn on him at the same time. I declare I am getting to hate the very name of the respectable labourer and working-man. That disreputable Greenhough is worth one-half of my village.'

'You hate him in a queer sort of fashion.'

'No. You're mistaken. It is genuine. I ask for nothing but a cool half-hour and a stand-up fight with him.'

'Why don't you crush him with your theories?'

'Now then, Howell, don't sit sneering in that fashion. He is more likely to crush me with his. There has never been a case of

discontent or encroachment in the village that I do not finally trace to him. They listen to him hard enough in the reading-room and working-men's club, where he goes to spread his socialistic opinions. He evidently thinks it a mission. I have not a wild bit of land left by this time—Greenhough is all over the place. I never open my window in the morning without looking out to see if they are fishing in the park pond, or whether they have knocked up a workshop on my front-lawn. When I turn the handle of my bedroom door, I do so in the expectation of finding them sitting on my stairs.'

'And yet you are leaving the place?' said Saul, laughing in spite of himself.

'Yes,' said Derrick, with a sigh. 'I have put in a good steward, though.'

'And what are you going to do about Greenhough? Perhaps you will give him a farm before you leave.'

'No; I draw the line there. I won't absolutely put him in a position of authority. Besides, there are none vacant. I have told

the steward, whatever he does, to take no notice of him. Howell, the other day I made up my mind to ask him to step aside with me that I might give him a black eye. I worked myself into a preliminary rage, and approached. He turned round, and, as I live, he looked at me with something uncommonly like brotherly affection.'

'It must have been your imagination.'

'No, it was not. I have no imagination, to begin with. And this would have been such a very wild flight. I said "Good-morning," and slunk away. If he would only "be forgiving," I might take him unawares and drop him into the nearest horse-pond. It would be a load off my mind. But he is just nothing but—Greenhough.'

'Well, I warned you.'

'You did. What a blessing it is to have a friend to warn one beforehand and bring it up against one afterwards! I shall miss you when I have gone, old fellow.'

'And when do you go, Devonporte?'

'At once. This week. To-morrow.'



‘Nonsense!’

‘I do, though.’


‘You are prompt. For how long shall you stay away?’

‘A year. Two years—perhaps half a dozen. I—I—am suffering from a sort of lumbago.’

Derrick tilted his chair again suddenly into its ordinary position, leaned forward with his elbows on his knees, and plunged his fingers into his hair. Saul surveyed him for long. He was not deceived by the mirthful self-castigation and derision which had run through all the Squire’s utterances; he saw that he was suffering acutely. And now he watched him narrowly, with a cold savage light in his eyes, while he speculated upon the cause.

It had to do with Marjorie, of course. But was this a fit of remorse for past villainy, or was it the excitement before projected crime? Did he mean to carry her with him?

It was characteristic of the state to which



the wildness of Howell's passion had brought him, that he envied Derrick his supposed position, while he constituted himself the determined avenger of it.

'Shall I see you again before you leave?' asked Saul presently, modulating his tone carefully to that of sympathy.

'Not again. No, I have too much to do,' said Derrick, looking up with his hair rumpled and with his unsuspecting eyes full of feeling.

Saul flinched and turned away. The sight of the pain in the young face that he had loved so well smote him to the heart, and for the moment his stifled affection rose up again and grappled mightily with his determined hatred, and urged him to lay bare his thoughts and to charge Derrick to confession.

He had risen, and now he leaned upon the mantelshelf, and involuntarily covered his face. The action seemed simply to express a natural emotion. When he turned again he was pale, but wore a friendly smile,

and holding his hand out to Derrick, said gently :

‘And so you are adding to your other crimes that of an absentee landlord.’

‘Most unwillingly, Howell. And one day—when all this has blown over—perhaps I shall be able to come and settle down and do my duty here far better than I have managed it before.’

And so, with a firm hand-shake, Howell and the Squire parted.

The next day Derrick, true to his word, left for the south in company with Miss Troisages, the Major, and Zachary. Having deposited his aunt safely with the Major’s friends, he and Zachary went on to Rome without making any further stay in London.

Saul of course remained where he was; and deeply did he ponder over all that had passed. His first conclusion was that a plan had been arranged by which Marjorie was to follow the Squire into some retreat. But when January and February passed by and

found her still at Cockshuthey, he arrived at other inferences. That the Squire intended to desert a woman whose love he had consciously won, was, he conceived, certain; had he not himself derided and denied the idea of marriage? But was there any deeper baseness hidden behind, or was he indeed flying from temptation?


So very little of the gossip of Hollyss and Moorfield penetrated to Milltown, that Saul had great difficulty in learning anything at all about Marjorie; indeed, nothing short of personal visits to the place had sufficed to assure him that she still resided there. And now, longing for further information, hoping to read something of the history of the past few months in her face, or at least to discover something of her state of mind, he constantly walked over to the village and wandered about in the neighbourhood of Cockshuthey, and waited for the chance of meeting her.

During the last two years he had not sought her, and she had avoided him; so

that it was not strange that their occasional encounters had altogether ceased.

One day, however, towards the end of March, he spent an afternoon at Hollyss, walking amid the lanes and fields, and scanning the highways and paths for the sight of the familiar figure in the blue working dress. He stood now by a gate which led from one walled field to another, and so on to the road to Moorfield. It was a bleak ugly spot; the hill sloped up behind and left only brown pastures and walls for the eye to contemplate, and at the bottom of the field the view was closed in by a wood, bare of verdure and attraction, through which the path went down to the road.

Howell had given up the idea of seeing Marjorie; he was resting for a moment, and enjoying the sunshine, the silence, and the loneliness. And when he saw her come up to the stile at the top of the field he did not at first recognise her figure. She had on a dress of the kind which for the last two years she had assumed; it was of a dark



colour, and made after a pretty and simple pattern. Instead of her straw hat and shawl she wore a long loose jacket of the same material, and a small close-fitting bonnet.

When Saul recognised Marjorie in the lady who stood hesitating for a moment by the stile she had just crossed, these changes in her attire struck him as so many witnesses against the Squire.

Marjorie did not perceive the minister until she came into the field, and when she saw who stood in the pathway on the other side of the open gate beyond, her first instinct was to turn and escape. But Saul had already started forward, and was coming back to her. An ignominious retreat, she thought, would not be consistent with the dignity of Abel Greenhough's wife ; she walked on with her head raised, and when she encountered him, bowed coldly and passed by.

'Marjorie !' exclaimed Howell, starting forward.

She turned and looked him quietly in the face.

‘Yes, sir.’

‘I have not seen you for two years. What have I done that you should pass me in that way?’

‘I am in a hurry, Mr. Howell. My mother is ill.’


‘You avoid me, Marjorie. You put me off with excuses. Yet you have no better friend than I am. I have been seeking you that I might tell you something that nearly concerns you.’

‘You cannot possibly know anything that concerns me,’ said Marjorie, walking on rapidly.

‘I do! I do! Like all other women, you are foolish and mad, and are rushing on to your own destruction. Let me save you!’

‘Sir, I have natural protectors, did I need them, without appealing to a stranger.’

Saul bent down and looked into her face; Marjorie was compelled to stop and step back to save herself from striking against him. They had reached the entrance of the wood



now; the path was narrow and thickly hedged with underwood and trees; Saul placed himself suddenly in front of her. Marjorie had no sense of fear; she looked calmly and with a faint feeling of wonder into his face. It was the same she had been accustomed to look on in the pulpit in old days, and yet it was changed;—the fair masses of hair appeared under his wideawake, the troubled brow and eyes were more remarkable than ever; but all that was spiritual had vanished, and instead of serenity upon the lips there was a savage kind of power, and when her eyes met his glowing eyeballs, she lowered them instantly and turned white. It was not with fear, however; it was with dislike.

‘A stranger, Marjorie?’

There was tenderness and depth in the rich-toned voice; it had the effect, however, of simply angering the girl.

‘Sir, although I am a mere farmer’s daughter, I am not aware that you have the right to call me by my name, or to



assume that you can detain me at your pleasure. Let me pass.'


'You used to let me call you "Marjorie."'

'Then, sir, I respected you as the minister. Now you have lost my respect.'

'You shall not say such things to me!' exclaimed Saul hoarsely; 'because I am truer and stronger, and love you more deeply than other men, and woo you perhaps more fiercely, you mistake my nature. I am tender, Marjorie, and faithful; and whatever had happened to you, you would grow always into my heart as my most sacred object of worship. I ask you to marry me.'

Marjorie suddenly lifted her hands and stopped her ears. She would have turned, but that instinctively she feared to take her eyes off his face.

'I will *not* listen to you, Mr. Howell,' said she quietly; 'I tell you now plainly, once for all, that I belong and have belonged for months to another man; and that under these circumstances your words are simple



pain to me ; had you known this fact, they would be insults.'

To Marjorie's surprise the minister seized her wrists and dragged her hands from her face.

'Do not be frightened, Marjorie. I am rough only in manner, not in heart. It is only because I *must* tell you something and you will not listen, that I act in this way. Is what you have said just now true ?'

'That I belong to another man ? Certainly it is true.'

'For months ?'

'Yes.'

'It is true. I know it. On the evening of the tableaux, after you had acted in public with the Squire, you met him in the garden.'

'He was there by appointment to take me home. Mr. Howell, you evidently have guessed or know our secret ; and as it can be of no possible concern or interest to you, I must tell you again that I desire no further

talk with you, and that you must let me pass.'

'Oh, Marjorie! Marjorie! I saw him embrace you! You have given yourself to him utterly!'

There was such an abandonment of anguish in the minister's face and voice, that the girl's anger was melted. He had loosed her hands, and had forgotten to detain her. She slipped past him, and now safe upon the other side, looked back, and said gently:

'Mr. Howell, if any trouble has come to you through my unworthy means, I am most deeply sorry. But things being as they are, there is only one way possible after this, and that is—you *must* see it—that you avoid me as determinately as I desire to avoid you.'

Saul, who was following her as she again began to walk rapidly forward, clasped his hands and raised them wildly above his head.

'Stay! stay!' he cried sharply. 'If you were happy—were fortunate—in this—this—'

connection, I might be able to bear it, I might bring myself to do as you say.'

'I am happy. God knows I had not dreamed that happiness like mine was to be found upon this earth. Leave me, Mr. Howell.'

'Never—until I have told you the truth. Like other women, you are choosing the dross and throwing away the gold. Marjorie! were you outcast and abandoned, I should seek for your love on my knees, and guard it when you had given it, as my most precious treasure. *He* will change; I shall not; my nature cannot change in love.'


Indignant and horrified at his persistence, Marjorie hurried on with her hands again to her ears.

The path through the wood was long, and it seemed to her that she should never reach the high-road. Oh that her husband would chance to come that way! But Saul, dashing through the brushwood, placed himself again before her; and fearful of en-

countering his touch again, she let her hands fall.

‘ I will only detain you a moment longer, Marjorie. I *must* tell you—I must bring you the sorrow, in the hearing of which lies your only cure. Forgive me, if I have mixed any expression of my own feeling with the message laid on me. Human love is strong. I have to tell you that you have given yours unworthily. You have bestowed it upon one who is capable of throwing it away. I repeat clearly and solemnly what I have hinted before ; he has changed ; he means to forsake you ! From the beginning he was a most unworthy lover for you, and you are utterly deluded in him.’

The day was when Saul would have trembled before the cold grandeur of Marjorie’s face ; but he had ceased to tremble before anything. It did not surprise him that she remained unmoved ; he meant his words to return to her memory when she knew what he knew ; and for that moment



he, in the dark obscurity of his untamed passion, longed unspeakably.

‘Have . you heard? You make no reply.’

‘I have heard.’

‘And you do not believe me. You think that he will not forsake you.’

‘I am marvelling at the effrontery which has troubled itself to utter these words.’

‘You marvel, because you do not believe me. I repeat that the man is prepared to desert you, and that he deliberately told me that he intended to do so. Forget that I love you, if you will; I entreat you merely to accept my words as you would a trusted friend’s, and to be warned by them. Marjorie, save yourself, if you will not let me save you!’

Marjorie looked at him in absolute amaze and perplexity. He had spoken with suppressed energy, and, as he told her to forget him, had flung his hands out with an impassioned gesture; there was excessive pain

and anxiety in his face; even beneath the savage force there was tenderness. But what could she think?

‘Mr. Howell,’ said she, ‘you are either mad or you are intolerably wicked.’

‘So be it then,’ said Saul, after the pause of two or three seconds, during which he seemed to fight for the power to speak. ‘To what fate you are thrusting me with yourself, I do not know. One day I shall stand before you—I seem to see it—as ruined outwardly as now I am in my soul.’

He lifted his hands again in the utter abandonment of his despair. Marjorie forgot both her own cause for indignation and her fear as she regarded him.

‘God,’ said she, in a trembling voice, ‘has the fate of both of us in His hand. He will not let us escape Him. I pray Him to have mercy upon you.’

And then, shocked and inexpressibly troubled by what she had seen and heard,

---

she passed him, and walked quickly down the path, and reached the safe highway before he had sufficiently recovered himself to be able to move.

END OF VOL. II.











